[Mr. Nellist]

could do worse than organise an additional public holiday for the millions of unsung heroes who have died consistently opposing Fascism over the past 65 years.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at comencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 80.

Division No. 124] **[4.00 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Browne, John
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McQuarrie, Albert
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Bruinvels and
Mr. John Watts.

NOES

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Donald
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lamond, James
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Straw, Jack
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Cohen and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Stephan Terlezki, Sir Anthony Grant, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Anthony Kershaw, Sir John Stradling Thomas, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, Mr. George Gardiner, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Robert Rhodes James, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mr. John Watts and Mr. David Atkinson.

Sir Winston Churchill National Day Bill

Mr. Stephan Terlezki accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the discontinuation of May Day bank holiday and to establish the Sir Winston Churchill National Day on or near to 10th May: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 24 April and to be printed. [Bill 122.]

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order 54(1) (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time; and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54(2) (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Education

4.11 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): It is with great pleasure that I commence what one gathers will be a lengthy debate on the Consolidated Fund. My pleasure is mixed with relief because every few years I hazard a chance in the ballot and usually end up making a nocturnal contribution. My pleasure in initiating this debate is doubled, therefore, by the unfortunate experiences of the past.

Education is a vast and important subject. I shall not range over it all, but shall fix on specific parts and, I hope, leave time for other hon. Members to participate in what is surely one of the most relevant debates that we can hold at this time. I shall deal with two aspects, both of them of national significance, although the first is of considerable local significance to my constituency of Leominster. I shall deal first with school closures, about which my hon. Friend the Minister of State has spoken in the past. School closures are of particular relevance to my constituency in terms of the future of rural schools. I shall deal secondly with teachers' pay and conditions, because this debate could not take place without talking about them.

In referring to school closures I shall emphasise rural schools in particular. I immediately declare my constituency interest because my constituency is one of the largest in south and central England, comprising 800 square miles and having within its circumference the grand total of one traffic light.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Ha, ha.

Mr. Temple-Morris: I see that my hon. Friend from Oxfordshire is bursting with merriment. Perhaps there are a few more traffic lights in Banbury. Nevertheless, it is a very pleasant constituency.

The education authority responsible for my constituency and the Hereford and Worcester county council remain, I am proud to say, Conservative-controlled. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will agree, and heed the fact, that Conservative-controlled areas such as mine feel strongly about some of the actions that the Department of Education and Science is rumoured to be thinking about—I say that advisedly.

Councillor David Muffett, the chairman of the Hereford and Worcester education committee has shown himself to be a champion of the small school. Pursuant to the injunctions of the Department of Education and Science, my local authority has been conducting a review. I am delighted that Councillor Muffett and his working committee have recommended that there should be no closures in the rural west, an area about which my constituency and I are particularly concerned. I am extremely relieved. Under the review, no fewer than two secondary comprehensive schools, two sixth forms in two other comprehensive schools are threatened with closure and numerous primary schools could be affected.

The Government and my hon. Friend the Minister of State should note some aspects of this review. I must say in their defence that this exercise is necessary whoever is in government. Both sides of the House are bound to ensure that the great amount spent on education—I shall not quibble about how much is spent here or how much there—is spent in the best interests of pupils.

In talking about closures, there must be a certain balance. I should like to give what is perhaps a slightly extreme and personal example. Obviously, every closure is a battlefield and every Member of Parliament becomes involved in virtually every campaign on closure. The first one in which I was involved concerned a small village school in my constituency in 1975 when Labour was in government. I pursued the matter right through to the then Minister of State, Department of Education and Science and I thought that I argued my case as well as most hon. Members could. But I found that I could not argue that the continuation of a school which then had 16 pupils, and whose population was to come down to 14 pupils, was a good thing. There must be a balance.

There is another side to the coin. Bearing in mind the pronouncements in recent years by the Department of Education and Science, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to beware of the sweeping macro solution, whether it comes from White Papers or from beautifully named circulars or is the result of a numbers game, appropriately played by that distinguished body, the Audit Commission. When I mention that name, I am sure that some of my hon. Friends shudder at the thought of the effects if some of its numbers are applied strictly and dogmatically and, perhaps above all else, if the case involving the numbers on which we settle is not argued with the British public and won. I do not think that we have embarked on that yet.

I said that each school represents an individual battlefield. I do not want to heighten the nightmare for the hon. Friend the Minister, but I must point out that 4,000 rural primaries and comprehensive schools could be affected. There are 2,000 village schools with fewer than 50 people. Many comprehensives, including Tenbury high school and Weobley high school, have well under the sacred numbers game mark of 900 pupils. Whatever we do in the House, we have to sell our case. In doing so, we must learn more about the economic, educational and social factors involved before we put up the backs of the entire rural world.

Hereford and Worcester county council, as part of its review, is commissioning a report on rural secondary schools from Warwick university. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who is in his place, and I are pleased to hear that. We know that our country will have something on which to base future decisions and will perhaps have a much better input when it comes to influencing the Department of Education and Science. My hon. Friend the Minister of State and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have shown that they have some sympathy with my comments.

[Mr. Temple-Morris]

I would like to quote a press release issued by Conservative central office, which contained remarks made by my hon. Friend the Minister during her recent visit to Truro during the by-election campaign. That release is dated Thursday 19 February and it shows her general support for the points I am trying to make today. I wish to quote those comments because I believe that my hon. Friend may have something to say about them when she replies. The press release stated:

"We are aware that there is concern in Cornwall and throughout Britain about the future of many rural schools and particularly about the effects of the Government's circular on the viability of smaller schools. We are re-thinking our policy on rural schools because we feel that parental choice is extremely important. We recognise that there may be a case for a more relaxed attitude to the size and future of these schools. There may be costs involved in allowing smaller schools to stay open. But we must also consider children—especially younger children — in rural areas such as Cornwall and the distances they might otherwise have to travel."

I have deliberately put that on the record because it is relevant — indeed, we will welcome any further comments about that from my hon. Friend.

The second aspect that I wish to discuss is teachers' pay and conditions. It is appropriate to discuss this at the present time. Let me say—I am sure to the relief of both sides of the House—that I will do my best not to be overly partisan, unless provoked. Frankly, I believe that the subject is far too important to be over-partisan. Surprising as it may seem, there is considerable agreement among the various parties to the dispute which should deny justification for the exacerbation of the present conflict.

Yesterday, in preparation for this debate, I re-read some of the long history of the matter. I went through the Burnham committee, up hill and down dale, from the days of Lord Burnham, I went through Acts of Parliament, Houghton's, Clegg's, Nottingham, Coventry and everything else. I have mentioned those quickly because I will not refer to them in detail—I am sure hon. Members will be pleased about that.

After several hours reading about the various matters, I reached the conclusion that it is utterly wrong that the Government of the day—dare I say, any Government—should not act to ensure that the present chaos does not continue to harm our children and our children's futures. Such was the conclusion that I inevitably reached having studied the regrettable mess involved.

The background to the problem is tortuous, to say the least. I will not recite the details, but will extract a few essentials. First, I wish to concentrate on the Burnham committee. In many respects that committee is at the heart of the matter. Hon. Members will be aware that it is virtually agreed that, for many years, there has been general dissatisfaction with the Burnham committee. The problem is not that dissatisfaction, but what to put in place of the Burnham committee. Moreover, the problem is how to achieve the necessary agreement to put anything in its place.

I wish to draw attention to three relevant reasons for such dissatisfaction—it is necessary to highlight those reasons to find the answer to the problem. The first is the old historical chestnut which, to a large extent, rendered Burnham inadequate and signalled its demise—the fact that Burnham could not deal with conditions of service, but only with pay. That had much bearing on the present problems. In this, Burnham is almost unique in terms of a pay-settling body and its inability to deal with conditions has been at the root of the current problems. This has to be altered and there is a good measure of agreement among the parties involved about that.

The second problem concerns the multiplicity of union representation. For better or worse, there has been a constant history of disagreement between the various unions involved with the committee. Should the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) ever be in government, he will appreciate that such disagreement represents a negotiator's nightmare when trying to reach agreement.

The nightmarish aspect continues because of the problems connected with the employers' side of the negotiations. That represents the dichotomy of the control of education — that between national and local government. That is a subject for a one-and-a-half-hour debate in its own right. For the purposes of this debate, however, we must accept the present position. It is always likely—it has been the case since May 1985—that there is different political control of the employers' side whoever is sitting where in this House. Should the Government of the day not control the employers' side of the Burnham committee, that is bound to create friction, especially when the ideologies of the various parties in the House are so different.

In addition to the national and local friction, there is the friction between the local authority representatives. They are politically divided and must cope with the additional pressure in negotiations of keeping in either with the Government of the day or with the Opposition. They attempt to play the national game as well as trying to deal with the future of education. That is not easy. Everyone must accept that this system should be changed.

I wish to give some relevant quotations covering a time span that is also relevant to illustrate how long the problem has continued. Successive Governments have had a desire to play a role, to a greater or lesser extent, in Burnham. Successive Governments have been increasingly concerned with the pay negotiations because of the increasing financial constraints that are involved when the country's economy is increasingly under pressure.

In 1963 the late Sir Edmund Boyle, Minister of Education, and hardly a person who could be called one of the more desperately partisan elements of the House, rejected the Burnham committee and set in train the arrangements that were in existence for Burnham until a matter of weeks ago. He said:

"In essence, the Burnham Committee's provisional agreement seemed to me to have got its priorities and thus its balance wrong. It gave too much weight to the young and inexperienced teacher and too little to the older . . . It rewarded insufficiently those who have the prime responsibility for organising the life and work of the schools. In short, it seemed to me that it was not just the details but the whole strategy . . . which was wrong."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1963; vol. 676, c. 431.]

That illustrates the time span of this problem. In my view, if the Minister of State or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made such a statement right now, it would be just as relevant. There seems to be an awesome prophetic quality in that quote. That speech led to the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1963, passed by a Conservative Government on an interim basis and then led to the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965 passed by the

then Labour Government. Indeed, since that time, successive Governments have implemented the new Burnham structure. It led to the Government's involvement in the Burnham committee via the so-called "concordat" which dictated the weighted vote, the veto and everything else with which hon. Members are extremely familiar.

An eminent Member of another place, Lord Houghton of Sowerby, when speaking on the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill in another place on 9 February 1987, touched on the union differences, which are an admitted fact. I do not claim that Lord Houghton is generally in support of what I am saying but I shall quote one part——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman should not quote directly from the speech of a Member of another place.

Mr. Temple-Morris: I am obliged, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I was becoming carried away by my quotations. My hon. Friends will be relieved to hear that the quote from Lord Houghton's speech was to be my final quotation.

Lord Houghton made it clear, with all his experience, that it is not a good basis for negotiation to have a body representing staff within which there are political and ideological differences, not to mention a different emphasis in militancy. Lord Houghton said that it was with a great sadness that he felt obliged to make that comment. He made it clear that the business had to be sorted out, that seven voices were far too many, that an interim solution was proposed and that, perhaps, most important, a permanent solution still lay ahead.

In the light of those important words it seems that the joint negotiating committee that emerged from the Coventry and Nottingham negotiations and those that took place elsewhere is an inadequate solution and must be reconsidered.

I have referred already to the concordat and to the spring of 1985. Whatever be the merits, it seems utterly wrong, if not downright asinine, that about half way through a four or five year dispute with serious implications for the future of education, central Government, following repudiation of the concordat, should be excluded from participation within the Burnham committee. For many years the concordat had rightly allowed the Government to participate, and the exclusion augured badly for the future. It was an example of a lack of responsibility or of over-enthusiasm following the takeover of political control of the Burnham committee by those whom Opposition Members support.

Everything that I have said is relevant to present and perhaps even more relevant to the future. First, we must get away from the ghastly past. I have tried to underline the fact that the past is ghastly and that we must get away from it.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Hear, hear.

Mr. Temple-Morris: I am glad to hear that the Liberal party has an opinion on these matters. It has not had responsibility for anything for many years, and perhaps it will not have any in future. That being so, it can laugh at just about everything that my right hon. and hon. Friends and Labour Members say about serious topics. We deserve from Liberal Members a little more than laughter. It would be more appropriate if they acknowledged the faults of the past. It would be encouraging — we would be lucky if this were to happen—if we were to hear a few of the things that they have in mind on this score.

We must take a realistic and objective view. For better or worse, the Burnham committee is dead. We shall not return to anything like it. It is important that that is underlined. Secondly, there has been a fair and generous pay offer, which will soon be in effect. We can argue about the details and the structure, but that must be done in an atmosphere of peace. The first priority is that that should be done through the right national negotiating machinery.

The action of some of the unions will get us nowhere. I think that it stems—I am not trying to be emotive or emotional—from frustration about pay and conditions, and that can be attributed at least in part to the actions of some of the unions over the years. Their present stance will exacerbate differences, cause friction with parents and harm children.

There is no option but to have talks with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the future machinery. I think that the entire House should accept that my right hon. Friend is only too willing to talk. I am sure that he wants to establish suitable machinery for the future. As a human being, he probably wants to get these matters off his back and get on with dealing with the future of education.

The public expect and deserve progress. They are entitled to greater cohesion than has been shown in years past when the vital issue of education has arisen. It is up to us in this place to give them a better future.

4.37 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I listened to the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) with some interest. I must congratulate him on two instances of refreshing candour. Two sentences will be prominent within the *Hansard* report of his speech that we shall remember in future. First, there is his blunt and candid recognition of the past — his Government's past in education — which he described as "ghastly". That will be the burden of the speech that I am about to make. I shall give him some figures to go home with.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: Secondly, the hon. Gentleman said that it is time that we got out of this ghastly mess. I could not agree more. The ghastly past in education has been created by the Government over the past seven years.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Not only the present Government.

Mr. Ashdown: It is not good enough to go back to 1979——

Mr. Thompson *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I have a good deal to say but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. I make it clear that I shall not give way a second time.

Mr. Thompson: I understand that the past in education goes back at least to 1960, when I started teaching. My hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) was right to describe the past in education as "ghastly". To try to pretend that that situation has

[Mr. Thompson]

occurred only in the past few years is a travesty, and the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) must acknowledge that.

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will listen carefully to the rest of my speech. I believe that the past in education is ghastly, and that it has been especially ghastly over the past eight years. I say that— *[Interruption.]* I ask the hon. Gentleman to sit tight and listen to some of the figures that I am about to produce. If he feels like making a speech countermanding them or questioning them, he may have the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: No. I have given way once already and I made it clear that I would not give way again. The hon. Gentleman has just made a 25-minute speech, and he has had the opportunity to advance his arguments.

Mr. Temple-Morris: It is a quick point.

Mr. Ashdown: I do not wish to be discourteous, but the hon. Gentleman has made a 25-minute speech and I think that the time has come for me to advance my arguments. I have given way once and I have made it clear that I shall not give way again.

The second part of the hon. Gentleman's speech that we shall remember is his contention that we cannot afford to invest in education because the economy is under pressure. We have just finished a four-day debate on the Budget, during which Opposition Members argued that the economy is under pressure. To this charge the Chancellor of the Exchequer contended that it was in wonderful condition. The hon. Member for Leominster cannot have it both ways. If the economy is under pressure, there will have to be spending constraints, which means that the burden of the Budget debate amounts to nothing. Alternatively, the economy is not under pressure, which means that the Government can invest in education for the future.

When we talk about policy we should not listen to promises. Instead we should examine the record. The Bible states:

"Ye shall know them by their fruits".

Some of the "fruits" should be catalogued for the benefit of the Minister of State, who is to reply. Since 1980, 1,791 schools have been closed.

What about the state of our schools? Twenty four thousand schools—about 66 per cent. or two thirds of the total — need substantial repairs or substantial decoration. That is the present position. One in three schools have leaking roofs, one in four schools have outside lavatories and one in five schools are overcrowded. Her Majesty's inspectorate report of 1984—I can take no more objective view than quoting it—states:

"Many of the country's schools are in a sorry state of repair and getting worse."

That is the legacy that the Government have left our schools.

The level of truancy in Britain is rising. One hundred thousand pupils regularly play truant. If Conservative Members wish me to put that information into terms that they will understand, that is equal to the populations of 50 full comprehensive schools regularly playing truant. I remind hon. Members that the crime figures published the other day stated that the peak age for offenders is 15, at a time when 100,000 children regularly play truant. A total of 141 schools have been forced to drop special subjects for less able, handicapped children because of lack of resources.

On average a child in a private school has 10 books. In state schools children have on average fewer than half that figure—slightly less than 5 books per child. Only two authorities in the whole of Britain—incidentally, both of them are London boroughs—provide enough books to meet the international standards that govern or at least, advise on such matters.

Last week, I asked the Minister of State about the GCSE. We discovered that resourcing for GCSE is almost a disaster and is producing something close to a crisis. Last week, I went to Bulmersh school in Reading. That school is not in any sense atypical. The teachers simply could not deliver the kind of resources that were required for rising 14-year-olds who are to take the GCSE next year. I was told by a master who is to take GCSE students through chemistry that there is one book between three students. Mock exam papers were withdrawn because they were inaccurate and gave a wrong impression. No further mock exam papers could be produced because, I was told, there were no financial resources to print them. The criteria for assessment of GCSE students of business studies were not even published until after the first assessment had to be made.

Our 14-year-olds who are rising towards taking GCSE are getting, as a national newspaper stated recently, a raw deal. That is putting it at its best level. At its worst, many are having their chances for the future completely blighted. When we talk about Government policy, it is fair to look back at what the Government promised. I have glanced through the Tory party manifesto for 1979. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members might listen. This is its promise:

"We must restore to every child regardless of background, the chance to progress as far as his or her abilities will allow."

I see the hon. Member for Leominister and the Minister of State nodding their heads. Let us consider whether that promise has been fulfilled.

Commenting on the same matter, Her Majesty's inspectorate's report for 1986 stated:

"Disparities of provision within and between schools and, in turn, opportunities available to pupils, are widening."

They are widening under the Government, seven years after the commitment was made. The Government have not taken one step towards it. In fact, the disparities are positively widening.

Let us now consider higher and further education. It is reckoned that reductions in funding to universities will now mean that, to stay solvent, universities have to get rid of about 2,000 teaching jobs in the next impending period. University departments are closing and whole universities are having to amalgamate. Indeed, I am told that the figures show that about 20,000 academic posts have been lost. As a result of a want of £8 million, all research funded by the Science and Engineering Research Council has halted. The brain drain from British universities and institutions is reaching flood proportions. Eighty two fellows of the Royal Academy — Britain's premier research and academic brains — are now permanently resident in the United States.

But that is not my greatest indictment. That is that, in a period of 3 million unemployed, perhaps costing Britain between £18 billion and £20 billion a year, and with the

prospect that it will cost four times that amount, British industry is being held back because of a massive skill shortage.

Our high technology industries, upon which the future of our nation will depend, are now growing at about half the average world rate for high technology industries. At least one of the reasons for that, as any high technologist will say, is the skill shortage that is affecting Britain. There are 30,000 too few graduates for new technologies. Next year, Siemens, the West German firm, will qualify more people at all levels of high technology than will the entire British education system. There are more graduate applicants for first jobs in Taiwan than in Great Britain. Whereas 40,000 people in Britain——

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I shall not give way. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for my discourtesy. He will no doubt have a chance to make his own points in a moment. I allowed one intervention. I made it clear that I would not take another.

In Great Britain today, some 40,000 young people are going into apprenticeships. In West Germany, 90 per cent. of children aged post-16 go on to training and education. That compares with Britain's 31 per cent. who go on to post-16 full-time education up to the age of 18. The level of 31 per cent. who go on to post-18 full-time education is the lowest of almost all of our sister nations. It is even lower than the number that Portugal sends on to post-16 full-time education. Meanwhile, to meet the gap of skilled teachers in Britain, if the whole output of the physics graduates this year went into teaching — which they certainly will not do — there would still be too few to meet the needs for physics teachers.

The problem for teachers is even worse. Some 5,000 of our teachers—usually the best—have left the job to go to better-paid employment elsewhere. Our teaching force is demoralised and dispirited and lacks the commitment that it needs. I make it clear that I do not blame the Government for all that. The unions have their share of blame as well. But there is no doubt that 12 million lessons have been lost through disruption. At least a part of that disruption has been the Government's deliberately provocative actions in taking away teachers' rights to negotiate their pay and conditions without necessarily a limit on the Government's power. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members know perfectly well what our policies are. We have said what they would be.

Education in Britain has been seriously damaged since the Government came to power. The Government claim that they have increased resources, if they are read as a teacher-pupil ratio. I do not deny that statistic. It is true that education resources per pupil in Britain have increased marginally, but the real point is that, with school rolls dropping, the Government had the opportunity, by maintaining spending, massively to improve education spending per pupil, but they have chosen not to take that opportunity. What a wasted opportunity that was. Education as a percentage of public spending has not risen. Even during the Secretary of State's term, it has fallen. Indeed, it now stands at 19·2 per cent. of public spending. That is lower than in any other OECD country. It is lower than Italy, Belgium and Ireland. The United States devotes about 24 per cent. of its public spending to education, and Japan about 36 per cent.

Education as a percentage of gross domestic product has again dropped under the Government, from 3·9 per cent. to 3·6 per cent., whereas the percentage for our sister nations is above 4 per cent. At the 3·6 per cent. level of GDP, we are significantly below the average of our sister nations. It is significantly less than the average for Austria, Ireland and Australia.

If the Secretary of State for Education and Science and other Members of the Cabinet believe that they should invest some of their personal finance to provide their children with the best education at private schools, why do they deny to other people the right to invest some of their personal finance in the education of their children at state schools? These are the bitter fruits of this Government's stewardship.

Many believe that the Secretary of State for Education and Science is using education much more as a vehicle for his personal ambitions than as a means of achieving something that will be lasting and useful. Many believe that he is using his ministerial post to drive forward his vendetta against local government. Whether or not that is true, it is assuredly true that this is a gimmick a day Secretary of State. The city technology colleges will do nothing to remedy the lack of specialist teachers in the inner cities. The interim advisory committee is his poodle to command teachers' pay tomorrow. Benchmarks were his next invention. He wants to centralise the curriculum, although 80 per cent. of it is already a common curriculum throughout Britain.

Does the Secretary of State intend to go over to the French system? He says that he does not want a state curriculum, but in an interview in *The London Evening Standard* on 17 March 1987 the Prime Minister said:

> "Don't forget we are also considering having a model syllabus which makes jolly certain that your youngsters are going to be taught some of the proper things."

Is that the official view of the Conservative party? The country would like to know.

The Secretary of State's policy is a gimmick a day. A gimmick a day keeps attention away from the real problems of education. Those real problems are slum schools, demoralised teachers, disruption in the classroom —for which this Government bear at least part of the blame—falling resources, the closing of universities, the widening skill gap in our industries and the yawning gap that is now opening up in terms of the opportunities that are provided for our young people in a two-tier education system, which means that the best education goes to the few who can pay, the rest having to put up with what is left over.

There is one step that we must take. We must begin to invest in education. That is not an investment that this Government cannot afford to make; it is an investment that they cannot afford not to make. Spending on education should be nearer that which is common in other nations. We ought to be aiming at 4·5 per cent. of GDP. We believe in that investment. To make that commitment now would produce the education system that this country so desperately needs.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House that this debate must finish at 5.41 pm. Therefore, I appeal for brevity.

4.53 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): One must always listen with a strong sense of scepticism to Liberal spokesmen on any subject. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) scattered around statistics with the abandon of a hired guest at a shotgun wedding casting confetti. He has thrown them at an inappropriate target and it gives no cause for celebration. I shall cite just two of his points. He referred to the ghastly past and attributed it largely to Burnham.

Mr. Ashdown: No, I did not mention Burnham.

Mr. Bowden: I recall that Burnham was wished upon us. It was born to the Liberal party in 1918.

Mr. Ashdown: I never mentioned Burnham.

Mr. Bowden: The hon. Gentleman mentioned Burnham in relation to the ghastly past. He also deplored the fact that there is a lack of training in technological subjects, yet when it comes to finding a solution, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has done, by means of the city technology colleges, it is dismissed as a gimmick-a-day approach.

I felt my age the other day when I was invited by the old boys association of my school to sponsor a dinner in Parliament for the association. It was not a grand school of the kind that the Opposition are so anxious to wish upon the Conservative party. It was a small grammar school in the slums of London. To those who lived in that part of London the school offered a ladder of promotion. They discovered their strengths by means of the teaching that was offered to them. When I first went into the science laboratory at that school, I remember that a saying was inscribed on the wall. It has stuck very clearly in my mind. It said:

"No structure without function.
No function without purpose."

It is as well to remember these three words, since they are the elements of education — purpose, function and structure.

Those of us who oppose the current educational nostrums and the modish educational theory that is propounded by education authorities such as the Inner London education authority are conscious of the fact that the educational priorities have been distorted or even inverted. The prime purpose of education is to educate children, not to employ teachers or to maintain buildings, important though that is. The second aspect, the function, is that teachers should work to a curriculum. The third aspect, the structure, takes into account the administrative back-up, the buildings and the education authority. We have indeed been placed in a ghastly dilemma over the last few years because these priorities have been put in the wrong order.

I continue to live in the part of London in which I was brought up. My children have gone to schools in the locality that I knew when I was a child. When I first qualified I taught at one of those schools. Then I became a governor of it, and subsequently I became a member of ILEA. I have wept over the fact that ILEA no longer provides the children of inner London with the same opportunities to find their place in life as existed 40 years ago when I went to Battersea grammar school. Many Conservative Members feel passionately about what has happened in inner London and in other education authorities that have been politicised. We believe that education has become a political football. Therefore, we are encouraged by the approach of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We are pleased that a proper sense of vocation is being reintroduced into the teaching profession.

Education debates provide an opportunity for hon. Members to reminisce. I recall that when I first went to school the rigour of education, based on the classroom curriculum, was of great importance. It was through literacy and numeracy that one obtained the skills with which the other delights and opportunities of life could be enjoyed. Apart from the classroom curriculum, there was another curriculum. I refer not to a covert or secret curriculum but to a curriculum that demonstrated that teachers were committed to their pupils. They were prepared to give up time to referee games at weekends, to play chess with their pupils at lunch time, or to rehearse and produce plays late into the evening. That is what education was about. Alas, those opportunities no longer exist in very many of the schools in that part of London in which I live. That is to the great detriment of London schools, but, more important, it is to the great detriment of the children who attend those schools.

The hon. Member for Yeovil made great play of those who can and those who cannot pay for education, but it is more sinister than that. Those who can pay move out of the inner-city areas to the leafy suburbs. Many of the comprehensive schools in those suburbs are the kind of school that Conservative Members wish could be found everywhere. When people move out of the inner-city areas, they leave behind them pits of deprivation in the inner cities.

We shall still have to deal with that problem. If we as a party do not deal with it, no one else will. There is no evidence that the Opposition are able to deal with it in the places where they control the education authority. The efforts that have been made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to introduce technological education through city technology colleges for those from deprived inner-city areas—where they can gain the skills that will give them the opportunity to proceed to work for Siemens or any other great organisation that requires that sort of skill—are a way towards that end.

I must confess that when I first came to the House and the abolition of the GLC was being considered I had grave misgivings about the abolition of ILEA, to the extent that I fought keenly for its retention. I did that, not because I had a great admiration for what ILEA was doing, but because I had an even greater fear of what might happen if it were transferred to the boroughs in which the various schools were situated. There was some benefit in inner-London boroughs being grouped together. There was strength that came from size and expertise that could be employed through that size. I feared for the children of Southwark if ILEA were to be broken up and they were to be subjected to the whims and wiles of a Southwark education authority, and I feared for the children of Lambeth if they were to be subjected to a Lambeth education authority.

In the intervening years, ILEA has not responded to the opportunity that was given by its being independent of the Greater London council and by having its members directly elected for educational reasons. That is something in which it failed to fulfil the opportunity and promise that was offered.

For that reason, we must seriously consider the future of ILEA: not because we want to destroy the structure, not because it is not functioning well, but because the future of ILEA and the purpose for which it is there is not being fulfilled. It is not giving the necessary skills, education or opportunities to the pupils that it is there to serve. I believe that there should be changes.

5.1 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I can probably express on behalf of the small group of us who have attended education debates for some time a feeling of disappointment that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) is no longer spokesperson for the alliance. He brought a certain wit and charm to our proceedings and, as this afternoon's deliberations have shown, we may well miss that wit and charm from our future debates.

I should like to speak on one or two of the points that the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) made. I realise that time is short, so I shall be brief and concentrate on a few small points. The hon. Gentleman rightly said —I do not say this in a critical sense; it is a somewhat trite comment, but an important and obvious one—that education is about children. That clearly must be right and we must develop a system in which we can give the best possible education to children. One of my grave concerns at the moment is the level of morale among those who are crucially important for delivering high-quality education —teachers. That brings us back to the themes that were developed by the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) in his opening contribution about teachers' pay and conditions and the negotiating machinery.

I have felt for a long time that the Secretary of State has developed a risky strategy. It is risky in two senses. First, it is risky because it plays around with principles, rights and freedoms. In a democracy there is a basic right to bargain collectively with one's employer. I know that Conservative Members have said on numerous occasions that the Burnham machinery was not working. On that point there is some accord across the House and between employers, unions and the Government.

However, I fear an argument that then goes on to say that, because practice in one form does not work, a principle must be abolished. In this case, that principle is the right to bargain collectively. I would be happier with the Government's intentions if I could genuinely believe that we are dealing with short-term interim provisions. The record of the Government suggests otherwise, and I can understand the concern of teachers who feel that we are dealing with the long-term abolition of the right to bargain. That has led to frustration and industrial action.

That brings me to the second part of the Secretary of State's risky strategy. By allowing that frustration and industrial action to continue, the Secretary of State is responsible for the disruption that is occurring in our schools. He cannot impose a settlement and at the same time expect acquiescence or high morale from the teachers. That is an important equation that the Secretary of State has failed to understand. In a dictatorship—but not in a democracy—a settlement can be imposed, but we are not dealing with an agreement, because there is no consent. In a democracy and a system as sensitive as education, morale cannot be imposed on teachers. I fear that, in the aftermath of this dispute, however it is settled, our education system will be damaged for a number of years.

I say to the Minister that we should be not just talking, but talking with the possibility of some movement on the part of the Government. The hon. Member for Leominster said that the Secretary of State's door was open. That may be right—I do not deny it—but if the Secretary of State's door is open, to maintain the metaphor, his mind should be open as well. He should be prepared to discuss and move. There will be no substantial loss of face for the Secretary of State, but if he moves towards the teachers there will be a substantial gain for parents and children in our education system. I urge him, even beyond the 12th hour, to think again about his proposals and think again about the implementation of his powers.

The hon. Member for Dulwich talked about the inner cities and described some of them as "pits of deprivation". I welcomed his analysis of the way in which the welfare state works and the extent to which it almost redistributes resources towards the middle classes and away from the working classes. That means that we need much more positive discrimination and much more direct action towards the inner cities. What has happened in my constituency, and in many other inner cities up and down the country, is that, because of the action of the Government, money has been lost in rate support grant that is desperately needed in the inner cities.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) referred to the recent reports in the *Daily Mirror* on our education system. That report concentrated a great deal on my constituency of Leeds, Central and referred to the Lincoln Green primary school in my constituency, where 197 children are on the roll. The hon. Member for Dulwich talked about pits of deprivation. I put it to him—I am sure that he will accept this — that there is a link between the physical fabric of education and the quality of education. Whatever teachers do in a school such as Lincoln Green — I know that its teachers perform excellently—the quality of the building will influence the climate and the ability of children to respond. That is why we need to invest in building.

The *Daily Mirror* pointed out in its excellent report that Leeds city council, using its own resources, will overcome the problems of Lincoln Green and a number of other schools. The council is coming up with devices to fund the inner city. How much better it would be if we had a relationship or partnership between central and local government to fund our inner cities so that children in schools such as Lincoln Green should not have to face the problems that they have in recent years.

The hon. Member for Yeovil made a point in relation to research and the problems which are facing the Science and Engineering Research Council. It is crucial — I recognise the problems — that the Government make additional money available for research in our universities and polytechnics. That is a crucial investment in the future of the country. It is an investment in our higher education system and an investment in our economy. The sums about which we are talking are small in terms of the overall budget but their meaning in terms of the Government's recognition of basic research will be important.

I talked about morale in our primary and secondary sectors, but morale in higher education is also low. If the Government could come forward with money for research they would, at a stroke, substantially improve that morale.

[Mr. Derek Fatchett]

I hope that when the Minister replies she will give hope to our scientists. I remember that under the Labour Government of 1974-79, Conservative Members talked about taxation rates causing a brain drain. The only brain drain that we seemed to experience then involved pop stars and film stars. We are now experiencing a real brain drain of Britain's top scientists and potentially top scientists. The Government must act to stop that.

A Government's stewardship of the education system is measured by two criteria—their ability to maintain morale among those who work in the education system and their willingness to invest in that education system. On both criteria, the Government have failed badly. They have failed the country and our children. They have a deplorable record.

5.10 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), first, on choosing a debate on education policy, and, secondly, on his success in winning first place in the ballot. That is particularly appropriate today after a substantial lobby of parents here and in Westminster Hall.

I congratulate the parents on the way in which the lobby was organised, and, in particular, the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations and the other eight organisations which, uniquely, came together to make it a successful lobby. I hope that they will go on lobbying for education. It is sad that in recent years resources for education in Britain have been given far too low a priority, as has the public's interest in the issue. I hope that those organisations will be successful in lobbying for education from now until the general election.

It is important in a debate such as this to pay tribute to the vast majority of our schools, their pupils and teachers. The vast majority of our schools provide a high quality education. Although all will lament the lack of resources, we should pay tribute to the high quality of work in our schools.

High quality education is fundamental to Britain's future. Britain's future prosperity will depend almost entirely on the skills of the British people, not on the skills of a small elite. It is incumbent upon us all to ensure that we confer on future generations the skills that will enable them to pay Britain's way in the world.

I do not want just to argue the importance of education in terms of our future prosperity. High quality education is fundamental if we want to live in a peaceful society. We must give people the knowledge and understanding to put fear in its place. We must persuade people that they can solve conflict by democratic processes. That means that we must confer on people the skills necessary to participate in a democracy. They must have the skills to evaluate information and to make choices and the self-confidence to speak up for themselves and genuinely to participate in a democracy. A good quality education is fundamental if Britain wants a peaceful democratic society.

Good quality education is equally important if people are to enjoy their leisure. Most leisure activities are enhanced and made more enjoyable by good quality education. The example that I often throw out at meetings is that even day-dreaming is more enjoyable when woven with knowledge, ideas and information. Whatever one's leisure activity, good quality education is likely to enhance it.

Moreover, we are entitled to have beliefs and a philosophy of life. In developing that, most people need knowledge, information and ideas. I would argue strongly that Britain needs good education if it is to be a prosperous, peaceful and democratic country in which people can enjoy their leisure and understand their own nature.

The tragedy is that instead of making vast strides in improving education in recent years, many areas have slipped back and opportunities have been missed. The Government's oil revenues could have been used to improve dramatically the quality of education, but instead most has gone to pay for unemployment benefit. Falling school rolls could have been a golden opportunity to expand and improve our education opportunities. As a teacher with a class of 36 or 40 pupils, I was always told that my difficulties would be ended because falling rolls and smaller classes were not far off. Much of that opportunity has been missed. Far too many classes are still too large for the teachers to be able to do an effective job and for pupils to obtain full benefit from the education that they are being offered.

On many occasions the Government have pleaded poverty, saying that they could not improve standards because of the lack of resources. Yet in the Budget debate the Government claimed that things are going so well that they have money to dish out. They have taken 2p in the pound off income tax despite the fact that most people made it clear in opinion polls that they would much prefer to see that money spent on better services. Nevertheless, the Government are saying firmly that they are not prepared to put the money into first-class education.

Let me take one or two examples. When the Prime Minister was Secretary of State in 1972 she firmly set out the Conservative party's commitment to provide, over a period of 10 years, nursery education for all three and four-year-olds. We did not get off to a tremendously good start, but at least up to 1979 we doubled the provision of pre-school nursery education. Since 1979, the improvement has been small. About 23 per cent. of children now have a genuine place in a nursery class or school. More telling is the fact that in 14 Conservative-controlled authorities since 1980 the number of nursery places has been reduced.

Many of my hon. Friends have been out this week, and will be doing the same next week, looking at pre-school education in Britain. All of them tell me what a marvellous job is being done in nursery education, but they also report that almost every nursery school or class has long waiting lists. Many people do not even have a nursery class or school in their locality.

In this day and age we should, like France, be able to offer a place in a nursery class or school to all three and four-year-olds whose parents want it. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate she will give us some idea of the Government's proposals for expanding nursery education and making a reality of what the Prime Minister claimed in 1972 was a necessity.

I agree with the hon. Member for Leominster that we should not close the small village schools. However, it is also important to have the resources to keep such schools open as effective institutions. I should particularly like to see far more of them developed as community schools. I

am always happy when Ministers decide not to close these schools, but they must accept that when they turn down proposals for closure they must provide resources to keep those as viable schools rather than give the children who remain in the schools a second-class education.

I am particularly worried about class sizes. Although we have seen dramatic improvements in pupil-teacher ratios, well over 1 million children are still taught in classes with more than 30 pupils. I cannot see how good quality education can be provided in such circumstances.

I agree that the quality of buildings is essential. At least £500 million must be spent, almost as an emergency provision, to bring Britain's school buildings up to even a minimum standard. I recently visited Bradford and Sheffield and saw the appalling state of the school buildings there, caused not by neglect, but simply by lack of resources. Time and again the authorities have appealed to the Government, who accept the case but do not provide the money. Both cities have a substantial number of people in the building trade who are out of work who would be only too pleased to be working to put those school buildings into good repair.

We should also consider the question of books. I know all the statistics, but one has actually to go into a school and pick up a text book to understand the problem fully. I left the teaching profession in 1974, but I often see the text books that I used still in use. That frightens me because, particularly in subjects such as geography, many of the facts are out of date. I found a dramatic example of that when I visited a school in Corby and found a book with a large section setting out the importance of Corby as an iron and steel centre.

How on earth can children be expected to believe what is in their text books when they contain whole sections describing industries that have completely disappeared from their locality? It is important for text books to keep up with the very rapid technical changes that are taking place. In subjects such as geography we should not be content for expenditure simply to stand still. We must get new books and materials into our schools much more quickly.

I am very pleased that the Government belatedly came up with a little extra money for the new examination, but I am sure the Minister will find that very considerable problems remain over providing resources for its introduction. In some places, people may have opted for an especially imaginative syllabus without weighing up the full resource consequences. In physics and chemistry, for example, some schools are committed to introducing a greater element of practical experiments for continuous assessment, but they do not have the necessary equipment or resources. Even at this stage the Government must turn their attention again to the problem of resources if the GCSE is to be fair to the children and to lead to the educational innovation that many of us wanted it to produce.

I want to highlight one further problem—the number of youngsters who do not stay on at school or in education. I suggest to the Government that it is a scandal that so many youngsters leave education when they would clearly benefit from remaining in school, in sixth form colleges, or in tertiary education. In Tameside in my constituency, 24 per cent. of youngsters who get five or more good O-levels leave school and do not remain in full-time education. The Tameside education authority area is, sadly, one of the worst in that respect, but in many authority areas where there is plenty of parental enthusiasm, and no poverty, the number of children who drop out of the education system at 16 is far too high.

I plead with the Government to come up with some system to encourage those with good O-level results to stay in education. In the past, many of them went into apprenticeships and then back into further or higher education on day release but, sadly, in many areas those apprenticeships have now disappeared. I challenge the Government to come up with a scheme to meet that problem. Unless we are prepared to introduce education maintenance allowances and to give the same financial encouragement for people to stay on at school as we give for them to go into the youth training schemes, we shall have a continuing, if not accelerating, drain on the number of young people who stay at school. They will continue to leave school far too early.

The Government should examine the status of education. They have dealt a blow to that status by the way in which they have dealt with teachers' pay and are dealing with student grants and resources for research. Youngsters in schools think that to have anything to do with education is to engage in an occupation and interest of which the Government do not approve. They believe that the Government approve only of people who go into the City and make vast fortunes through speculation.

The Government must turn the whole atmosphere round to promote a new belief in the importance of education. Only by doing that can they begin to ensure that we get the best out of our schools rather than a continuing decline in morale. Only by doing that will they ensure that we get the best out of our further education colleges and out of higher education in all its forms. If we do not give education its proper status, it will be considered something in which people become involved only if they are unsuccessful.

While the present atmosphere remains, our future is at risk because education holds the key to a prosperous, peaceful, democratic society in which people can enjoy their leisure and develop their individuality. Unless we put resources into education and accord it a genuinely high status, our future will be very bleak.

5.28 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I join the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) on introducing this wide-ranging debate on education. I am delighted to respond to it because hon. Members on both sides of the House have made some most interesting points.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leominster wisely reminded me that his constituency was in Herefordshire. I recently visited Hereford and Worcester in the course of my ministerial duties. I was interested to learn that the chairman of my hon. Friend's local education committee, — who had no doubt studied the publication "Better Schools" and the draft circular "Providing for Quality" on which my Department has asked for comments — had recommended to his committee a no-closures policy for his county.

Such a decision is entirely at the discretion of individual local education authorities. My hon. Friend did well to draw the attention of the House to the importance of making such decisions with educational, as well as

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

economic, considerations in mind. That is extremely important. In some rural areas—where a long journey to school would be detrimental to the health of children and worrying to their parents—it is difficult to imagine children receiving education in anything other than a rather small primary school. However, authorities are responsible for ensuring that children at those schools can have the benefit of a broad-based curriculum within the constraints of primary school organisation.

Local authorities have an important judgment to make. That judgment applies to secondary schools, too. It is obviously sensible for my Department to offer advice on criteria—but not lay down definitive criteria—for the size of secondary schools. In Truro, I tried to reinforce my belief—and the Government's strong belief—that it is important for parents to be able to choose the school that they believe will be right for their child. That choice should have a high priority in our education policy. It is not possible to have a policy whereby some very popular schools are eliminated, thereby depriving parents of choice, and at the same time enable them to have freedom of choice of schools. This is an extremely important point.

The other point which my hon. Friend raised concerned the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act. I am very grateful to him for pointing out that the reason why something had to be done was basically the existing disharmony—particularly the differences between the teachers' unions. He was quite right also about the local education authorities, and I would point out that very often in the past it was not merely that local education authorities were of different political views from the Government; even when they were of the same views, it was not necessarily the case that in the negotiations in the ill-fated Burnham committee they were in agreement. Indeed, I was present on two occasions when that was clearly demonstrated.

We have been left in some disarray as far as our negotiations with the teachers are concerned. The unions want a new negotiating committee, and I understand that. The problem is to devise a committee in which we, and indeed everyone else, can have some confidence. There does not seem to be any point in setting up new machinery which is no more effective than the old machinery which we have just abolished.

Under the new Act, the Secretary of State is required to set up an interim advisory committee to consider school teachers' pay and conditions. At present, he has no choice. The committee will consult the unions and the local authorities before making recommendations for April 1988. The Secretary of State is then required by the Act to discuss those recommendations with the unions and the authorities before putting proposals before Parliament. Those discussions will inevitably have something of the character of negotiations. The interim advisory committee will bring a welcome respite, as my hon. Friend has so wisely said, with regard to the breakdown in sensible negotiations. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that the arrangements set up by the Act are interim. The Act is due to expire in 1990 and can be extended beyond that date for a year at a time only with the approval of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: On that point, will my hon. Friend confirm, as I hope she will be able to do, that during this interim period the Secretary of State's door will be open for informal discussions between the Ministers concerned, union leaders and members of the parent-teacher associations? There is a good initiative in Norfolk to try to bring people together. The unions are saying that the door is closed, but I believe that the door is open. Can the Minister confirm that?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am very happy to confirm to my hon. Friend and also to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) that my right hon. Friend has reiterated that his door is open. The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) would be wise to wait and see how many of the teachers come to see my right hon. Friend to discuss. I am sure that he will be very happy to see them and to listen with the greatest care to what they have to say.

I hope that the Act will be recognised for what it is—a temporary measure to make it possible to escape from a negotiating cul-de-sac. It is most important that it is put into operation.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the Minister say whether the order is going to be laid this week or whether the Government are going to delay so that we can have these negotiations?

Mrs. Rumbold: We are not intending to delay any longer than we have to, because it is extremely important that we get the orders laid in time to allow the back pay to go into the teachers' salaries. I am sure that hon. Gentlemen would not wish that to be delayed at all.

It is very sad that the hon. Member for Yeovil should have made such a destructive speech. It is a shame to come to the House and do nothing but pull to pieces the whole education structure. We heard nothing but a saga of destructive comments about education in this country. I share with the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) the belief that there are many teachers throughout the country who work extremely hard, produce extremely good results and have a very important effect upon the life of young people in this country. So it seems to me to be an absolute disgrace that someone should come to the House and not recognise that.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: No, certainly not; under no circumstances will I give way.

The hon. Member for Yeovil mentioned truancy, which is interesting when one thinks of an authority which operates not a hundred miles from the House, where the schools are adequately resourced—indeed, according to an HMI report, in one case so adequately that the resources could be called lavish. The number of pupils is 900, the number of teachers is 118—an amazingly higher number than one can find in many parts of this country—yet it still has a problem because it does not have many children going to it. The reason is that the children are not motivated and do not want to go to school.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: No. I am very sorry, but the hon. Gentleman refused to give way to anyone on the grounds that he did not have enough time, and I do not have much time either.

With regard to the general certificate of secondary education, I must remind the hon. Gentleman that this new examination was introduced after long negotiations and discussions with the teachers' unions. They wanted

this examination very badly indeed because they believed that it was the right thing. The Government agreed with that and thought that the best thing to do was to get on with introducing the examination. We have done exactly that.

The Government have committed substantial resources to the general certificate of secondary education. There was £20 million directly, in 1986-87, for books and equipment, £100 million through the rate support grant in 1987-88 for all aspects of GCSE non-teaching costs, including books and equipment, clerical and technical support staff and storage facilities; £10 million of this is for books and equipment going to local education authorities directly.

I understand that there is some concern about training among the teaching profession. It is quite natural when a new examination is introduced, one that is so testing to both teachers and children, that there will be a settling-in period, but I do not and cannot accept that it was wrong to introduce this examination, because I believe absolutely passionately that it is for the benefit both of the children and of the teachers themselves. I suggest that it is very important that we concentrate on that.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who said that the prime purpose is the education of children. He is absolutely right; he has the priorities right. He is quite right, too, to draw our attention to the devastation of the grammar schools started by the Labour party and continued by the Liberal party at the present time where Liberals are in control of local authorities — as in Kingston, where I used to be the chairman of the education committee, in Sutton and even in Devon. So it seems to me that there is some point in asking Liberal Members just exactly how they are going to improve the standard of education throughout the country.

I want to say one or two things to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, on nursery education in particular. I understand the point that he is making, but I think it is important to draw to his attention the Government's belief that the devolved and discretionary basis on which nursery education is currently available is the best way to ensure the flexible and effective use of scarce resources. Furthermore, not every young mother believes that compulsory nursery education is the right thing for her child. There should be alternative methods of introducing children to peer groups when they are young. This can be done through nursery classes, through nursery schools or through the very valuable experience of pre-school playgroups.

I am very glad to be able to say that the Government have been making grants, in particular to the Pre-School Playgroups Association. The Government make grants in excess of £400,000 and this year the DES grant was increased by 50 per cent., from £60,000 to £90,000. I was very pleased about this because I believe that that experience is extremely important to children. But I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that I have heard from some of my own constituents expressions of concern that my own authority was planning to institute nursery classes attached to every primary school in the borough.

This would put pressure on mothers who choose not to send their children to nursery schools, because they would fear that they could not get them into the primary schools of their choice when the time came, simply because of pressure on primary school places. That is an important point.

A point was raised about participation rates for people of post-compulsory school age. Many figures were quoted but my figures come from good sources and show that participation rates for 16, 17 and 18-year-olds in any form of education or training, whether full-time or part-time, range from about 65 per cent. in 1981 in France, Italy and the United Kingdom to 84 per cent. in Germany. The level of take-up by 16-year-olds in the United Kingdom undertaking some kind of educational training, including the YTS, was 87 per cent. in 1983. That seems comparable with, if not better than, the percentage for other countries. We are proud of that and are planning to increase it because we are concerned about what happens to young people after they leave school. We want to see that they have the opportunity to increase their skills and to have educational opportunities which will bring them into a better work force in future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before announcing the next debate, I should inform the House that there is a mistake in the title of debate No. 4. It will be on the beef industry and not just the Scottish beef industry.

Sport

5.41 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I welcome the opportunity for this debate — *[Interruption.]* — and judging from the "Hear, hears" from Conservative Members it is clear that I and my hon. Friends are not the only ones who welcome it.

Why has a significant debate on sport not been held since April 1977? At that time there was a debate on a sports White Paper which had been published some 20 months previously. This is all the more surprising since sport plays such a major part not only in the nation's social and leisure calendar, but in its economic life. For those reasons, it demands greater stature and prominence in this House.

Sport accounts for over £4·4 billion of expenditure each year, a figure that is comparable to expenditure on the gas or electricity industries. The Government's income from sport is now £2·4 billion from taxes and betting duty, yet only £545 million is injected back into sport through rate support grants, the Sports Council and the urban programme. More people are employed in sports-related jobs—about 376,000—than are employed in Britain in the manufacture of cars and their ancillary parts. Nearly 16 per cent. of the BBC's television output is coverage of sport and that is comparable to other networks.

When one looks at the diversity and the importance of sport in Britain, one wonders why it is debated so infrequently in the House. In the last debate, the two Front Bench spokesmen were so delighted at the opportunity to debate sport that they spoke for one and a quarter hours — over half the debating time. What they said, and especially the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), was worth listening to. This debate is the first in over 20 years to allow hon. Members three hours in which to display their interest in the sporting issues of today and in the problems associated with sport. With very little opportunity for them to support sport, it has been left to people outside to highlight and often to distort the problems of sport.

Just 13 days ago, at the Central Council for Physical Recreation's annual general meeting, the Duke of Edinburgh contrasted the arts with sport and said that from the sports point of view it is not a particularly happy picture. How right he was. He recognised the importance of sport to the economy and to British life by pointing out that on top of employing twice as many people as in the arts in Britain, more than 43 million hours of volunteers' time is taken up each year in helping sport. I do not wish to knock the arts, which are also under-funded, but these comparisons put the matter in a better context.

Among other things, His Royal Highness called for a stop on the selling of playing fields for development. I concur with what he said. In today's Order Paper, 44 hon. Members from all parts of the House have signed an early-day motion in my name on the subject. I hope that after today's debate many more hon. Members will do likewise. I shall return to that later in my speech.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all the hon. Members who signed his excellent early-day motion, and many others who have not yet signed, are opposed to the disposal of even one more school playing field? Many are under threat but not one more should go.

Mr. Pendry: I am pleased to hear that intervention and I hope that many Conservative Members will press their right hon. Friends on the Front Bench to see that this practice is discontinued.

The Duke of Edinburgh highlighted other areas for reform, including a reduction in taxes and in the rate burden on non-profit making sports clubs. He called for reform of the administrative structure of sport, which he said should be streamlined. I shall later deal with those issues, but suffice it to say now that the lack of time available to us means that sports lovers like the Duke, rather than the politicians, must set the agenda for sporting issues.

At the CCPR annual meeting, Cliff Morgan delivered a stirring address which highlighted the emotion and the power of sport for good in today's tough society. In a plea to all of us he said:

"Please don't sell our sport short. It breaks down the barriers, it unifies people."

As a former Northern Ireland Minister, I know that sport in Northern Ireland breaks down many of the barriers facing young people. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) can vouch for that. Cliff Morgan went on to say that in Britain, the birthplace of much of modern sport, there is still no Minister of Sport even though Lord Hawke, an old-fashioned Tory, commented in 1919:

"Ministries for dafter things than sport had been set up".

I agree with that.

The most recent past Minister with responsibility for sport is the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane) who recently wrote about his time in that post. In his book the Government's view of sport comes through clearly when he relates what happened when he was first appointed. At that time, he says, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said to him, "You do like sport, don't you?" One of his predecessors, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) recalled his days in the post. He said that he spent

"four years . . . as a member of the smallest, most unimportant trade union in the House, the trade union of Ministers with responsibility for sport".

The Prime Minister's answer to my recent question calling on her to list the responsibilities of the Minister with responsibility for sport clearly shows the post's lack of stature. She said that her hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey)

"has special responsibility for sport and recreation and, in addition, supports his colleagues on planning, regional affairs, housing, inner city and gipsy issues." — [*Official Report*, 2 March 1987; Vol. 111, c. *464*.]

At a time of crisis for one of our most famous football clubs — Fulham — is it not extraordinary that the Minister responsible for sport is unable to speak out against bulldozers levelling the ground for housing, because that application may well be referred to him when he is wearing his planning hat? This crazy situation whereby the Minister spends only 20 per cent. of his time on sporting matters must be ended. Of course that is not the Minister's fault, but how can he allow a club that was established in 1879 with a stand, the Stevenage stand, which was built in 1905, to be bulldozed to the ground in this way? I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) will expand on that matter if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have touched upon one issue facing football now, just as I spoke on football's problems in the debate 10 years

ago. Football continues to have its problems—although they are much overstated by the press — and is not helped by the Government's knee-jerk reactions being followed by ill-thought-out legislation. Our national game deserves more than that, and I should like to dwell on two ways in which the game can be improved. The first is an old hobby horse of mine because I introduced a Bill last year which ran out of time because of the summer recess.

The establishment of a football levy betting board could give real and continued financial support to the game. Last year the Government took £234 million in pool betting duty out of a total take of £550 million on football pools — a duty level of 42·5 per cent. The Royal Commission on Gambling, chaired by Lord Rothschild in 1978, thought that a 40 per cent. tax was then too high. By reducing the duty level to 40 per cent. and adding the money from VAT on spot-the-ball competitions and from copyright payments for football fixtures, more than £50 million would be available each year to benefit football.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I ask my hon. Friend to compare the treatment that horse racing and football have received from this Government and from past Governments. Football is the poor relation in that respect, although it provides massive amounts of money for the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Pendry: I am trying to make that point, but I do not want to fall into the trap of knocking one sport or another, or the arts against sport. We must fight for a higher volume in the whole sporting area. The money that I suggest would accrue from the football pools through the football levy board would be invested in grounds, in new terracing and seating, in better refreshments, and new stadiums for the 21st century. We would have schemes that would attract people to football, to league clubs and to non-league clubs, and also to the rapidly developing game for women in this country.

The recent measures agreed between the Government and the football authorities should help to combat hooliganism. The membership aspect of the agreement has been highlighted by the press, but I believe that the local plans idea that emerged will have more impact. I am sure that the Minister agrees with me and will elaborate on that. The clubs will have to meet with the police, the local authority and the local supporters clubs, and create a local plan which would assess the issues affecting games at the club.

The channels of communication that will be opened by this move are long overdue and will benefit football. Our football clubs have not been standing idly by in the past year waiting for Government measures. Closed circuit television cameras are now in place throughout the first and second divisions and they will be extended throughout the league. Family enclosures now exist in 67 clubs. Segregation of fans is better than it has ever been before, and attendances at matches this season are up on last season. These positive moves are often overlooked. Football is attacked far too often when it should be praised for meeting many of the challenges that are facing our national game.

The second way in which football can be improved is through better community use of our clubs. The community programme backed by the Football League and by the Professional Footballers Association is being expanded from the original six clubs in the north-west—clubs as varied as Manchester United and Bury—to 10 more clubs ranging from Liverpool at the top of the league to Rochdale at the bottom of the fourth division, and I hope eventually to all 92 clubs.

These clubs are becoming focal points for the community, not just for football but for women's aerobics and pensioners' bowls as well. Surely that is the direction in which we must move, rather than building bigger and better fences around our grounds and banning supporters from matches. Coupled with the admirable Sports Council Action Sports initiative going nationwide, the community focus for sport is at last being taken seriously, even though these schemes are getting little support from a Government who are determined to tackle the problems in football through legislation rather than understanding.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): The hon. Gentleman has quite rightly pointed out the part played by football clubs in the community and the encouragement that is being given to them. Will the hon. Gentleman agree that that role can be encouraged also by the use of synthetic pitches so that clubs are able to use their pitches 365 days in the year, for all the various activities described, without detriment to the club? Is he therefore somewhat worried by the attitude of the Football League and Football Association towards synthetic pitches, which may reduce the community use of those club grounds?

Mr. Pendry: I am sure the hon. Gentleman would have wished to declare his interest when making that intervention, as he is the hon. Member whose constituency covers Luton Town. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and develop his point. I believe that plastic pitches cannot be ruled out at the lower end of the divisions. I believe that that should be the experimental ground for much of what may come later, but the plastic pitch has not been perfected—certainly not at Queens Park Rangers or at Luton Town. Eventually, with the advances of modern science and with many companies engaging in manufacture, we shall some day be able to play in the first and second divisions on plastic pitches.

I should like to move on, because I know that there are other speakers. We must remember that the Government cut the Sports Council grant this year, but we can see some hopeful signs. I have seen much development of women's participation in sports. Women are often left out of sporting debates, but what is happening in this area is very heartening. It is encouraging to see that at last we have on British television an expert in her field—Sally Jones—who has a couple of blues at Oxford and who can speak with great authority on the subject. That is a very good sign that we are moving in that direction.

The relationship between the Sports Council and other sporting structures needs further examination. *[Interruption]* My right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath has strong views on this subject. I have touched on the role of the Minister, a post which has not been adequately filled since my right hon. Friend was there. In my sporting travels to the Olympics in Munich and Moscow and to the Mexican world cup, his was the one name that rang out as the politician who had done most for sport, even though he is no longer a Minister. I know that he is not well today, but wild horses could not keep him away from a debate of this kind. I am sure every hon. Member is pleased to see him here.

[Mr. Pendry]

The current situation with the Sports Council and the Central Council for Physical Recreation working against each other rather than in tandem was highlighted by the second report of the Environment Committee — with many of whose conclusions I and others did not agree. Those problems continue to worry many of us. Admirable work has been done by both bodies. Especially, Peter Lawson of the CCPR and John Wheatley of the Sports Council are doing invaluable work for sport, but those two bodies must work more closely together and give a collective voice to sport. I do not believe that politicians receive adequate pressure from those bodies or the media generally to respond to the problems facing the league today. I do not think that pressure is adequately applied.

The sporting voice desperately needs to be heard. Sports pitches throughout the country are threatened by the Department of Education and Science's regulation 909. The commitment from the Labour party to repeal this ridiculous legislation has already been made clear by our Front Bench spokesman on education. With each week that passes, more and more pitches are lost for ever to the developer. We must preserve the spots of green land that dot our inner-city landscape and if they are no longer needed by schools because of falling rolls, they should be seized on by the community for the community. I know that my colleagues wish to develop this point, so I shall not go on about it for too long. It was nice to hear the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

Many small non-profit-making sports clubs face an unreasonable burden from the rates. The rating system must be reviewed and harmonised throughout Britain, not by increasing the rate charges to the higher levels experienced in Scotland but by looking at the system in Northern Ireland. When I was Minister in that Department — I am bragging here — I introduced an order which provided a statutory rate reduction of 65 per cent. for clubs that are recreational and non-profit-making. This followed wide consultation with many sporting bodies and it was welcomed across the whole of Northern Ireland. My office rang the Northern Ireland Sports Council this morning and heard that it is still extremely happy with it, so it could be a model for the rest of the United Kingdom. We should be helping sports clubs whose volunteers give us their precious time in the name of sport, not penalising them for doing so.

I hope that we will debate sport more regularly than once a decade. Earlier this month, a "Panorama" programme brought out the issues bandied about concerning school sport—participation versus excellence, team sports versus recreation for all, specialist helping versus health for life. As chairman of the parliamentary Labour sports committee, I make it clear—I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath will do the same — that the health of sport in our schools will influence Britain's sporting future for years to come. The undermining of the value of school sports by the Government selling off playing fields, by cuts in school budgets and by the confrontational attitude to teachers is leaving sport in a sorry state. These attacks must be reversed and a clear philosophy spelt out to schools.

Excellence should be encouraged in those who can attain it, particularly through links between schools and local sports clubs. Those who find sport difficult should be helped and encouraged so that they develop an interest in sport that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Competition in sport is enjoyable and exciting for some, but that is merely one approach. There should be a choice, with a real emphasis on participation so that everyone can play on his own terms in his own way at his own level. Competition and participation can and should work closely together in schools, particularly in areas where joint use of facilities between school and community is a reality. Only if they do that will sport stay healthy.

On the subject of joint use, I firmly believe that it is misguided Governments and local councils who threaten sport far more than head teachers, because they see sport as a peripheral rather than an integral part of life, and refuse to open facilities for maximum use to the community. I could go on, as I have barely scratched the surface of this subject. However, I know that many others wish to speak.

I end as I began, by calling for sport to be treated seriously in the House. The subject deserves regular debate rather than having to wait for a tragedy, a crisis or luck in the ballot for it to reach the Order Paper. Sport is of vital importance to so many people in Britain. Over 13 million people take part in sport at least once a month. The House must take the lead in sport not by making people fit Olympic training schedules into their lives but by promoting the joys, exhilarations and sheer diversities of sport. In a period of change, when leisure is of real importance, as the working week shortens and people retire earlier——

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The hon. Gentleman has spoken about the expansion of sport and its importance in society. Will he lend his voice and that of his party to improving the chances of Sunday racing being introduced, as it is long overdue?

Mr. Pendry: I know that the hon. Gentleman is interested in this subject. I hope that he will catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to develop this point further. I was coming to the end of my speech and the hon. Gentleman rather spoilt it. I shall try to pick it up. It is my fault for giving way, but I know that the hon. Gentleman is keen on this subject.

As all these factors—the shorter working week, early retirement and unmployment—come together, we have to look to sport in a way that we have not looked to it before. My right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath, I and my colleagues will make sure that the Labour party will strive to ensure that sport has a higher priority on the political agenda.

6.5 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for his good fortune in drawing this subject high in the ballot and for having a good three-hour debate. I hope that we shall have many contributions from both sides of the House. I endorse the hon. Gentleman's idea that the House should debate sport much more. The hon. Gentleman spoke sensibly. I did not agree with all that he said — he would not expect me to do so — but I pay tribute to him for the work that he has been doing, in his party and on the all-party football committee, in trying to promote our national game. As he rightly said, it is a pity

that it needs a crisis for us to discuss this important subject. That is why I hope that today we can discuss it in an atmosphere of calm and all-party understanding.

As chairman of the Conservative party Back-Bench committee on sport, I feel it incumbent on me to say that we are proud of the Government's record in sport, warts and all. The Government have faced some of the real problems presented to us for reasons in many cases far outside sport—such as the breakdown in law and order—which have nothing to do with football but which are attendant on the sport. The Government have tackled the problems with vigour and enthusiasm. In particular, I associate my remarks with the present Minister with responsibility for sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey).

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Health (Mr. Howell) made some remarks about the Sports Council grant being cut next year. I remind him, although he needs no reminding, that the budget has not been cut. It has not been increased. Two years ago the increase was stated as being for two years. I know that the right hon. Gentleman takes a great interest in this subject.

Our difficulties in the House and as a Government stem from the fact that we should not be seen to be interfering too much in sport and sport administration. We should be here to guide sport through the various labyrinths of legislation and to put in legislation where it is necessary. However, the Conservative party is most reluctant to dictate to sportsmen, sportswomen and administrators the path that they should follow. Ours should be no more than the guiding, and gentle, hand on the tiller, rather than the direct interference that I fear that some Labour Members may wish to have.

The Government have tackled the most recent problems in football. I know that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde is well versed in football. The crisis that we had to face after the events of Birmingham, Luton and the Heysel stadium and the tragic events of the Bradford fire have resulted in legislation, and encouragement has been given to clubs, with a gentle hand from the Government, to put their house in order.

I endorse the recent agreement made by my hon. Friend the Minister with the Football League on membership and the various measures that he has taken. However, the Government could have done more about tobacco sponsorship. I was interested that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde avoided that subject. I remind him—and perhaps either he or the right hon. Member for Small Heath would like to confirm it—that it seems to be written into the Labour party manifesto for the next election that it sees an end to tobacco sponsorship for sport. That is the information that we have been given, and I notice that Labour Members are not denying it. That step would have a devastating effect on sport, and it is totally out of keeping with many sports lovers on the Opposition benches—and perhaps the many smokers as well.

Sport needs all the friends that it can get. If members of the tobacco industry are interested in pouring large sums of money into sport, to its direct benefit, not only at high national and international levels, but at lower levels through the clubs, we should accept that money, which is very welcome. I do not agree with the argument that other money is available. If it is, it can be used in addition to the tobacco sponsorship and not as a replacement.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not know whether the matter of tobacco sponsorship will be in the Labour party manifesto—I hope that it is—but does not the hon. Gentleman recognise the conflict whereby sport encourages people to be healthy and active and smoking does precisely the opposite?

Mr. Carlisle: I endorse what the hon. Gentleman says, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) has said, the agreement is voluntary. Until smoking becomes illegal, it is perfectly moral for any sport to accept money from the tobacco industry. Indeed, the money that is given to sport encourages people to become and remain healthy—very much along the lines that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde suggested.

It has already been mentioned that school sport is very much to the fore, particularly because of the industrial dispute in education. I found it distressing to learn from a recent "Panorama" programme on television that some schoolchildren are now considered to be less fit at the age of 15 than their parents are at the ages of 40 and 45.

We are all aware that, in many schools, not necessarily those in Labour-controlled authorities, competitiveness has been taken out of sport. That is to be regretted. I am very pleased to see that the Inner London education authority — I am sure that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has an interest in this—has reversed its policy on competitiveness in school sport.

One of the keynotes in the Duke of Edinburgh's speech at the annual general meeting of the Central Council for Physical Recreation was that we must encourage competition in our schools. Some independent schools are not averse to that type of criticism. It is to be regretted that, in many schools, competition has been reduced for all sorts of reasons—not only because of the teachers' unwillingness to teach sport, but the problems with caretakers, groundsmen and so on. Sport in schools must be competitive and be part of children's education.

As the Duke of Edinburgh said, when referring to the rising rate of juvenile crime, about which all hon. Members are concerned, the real alternative of sport and leisure, particularly in the inner-city areas, is now under threat because of the attitude of some schools. We should consider that more closely and try to encourage more competition within those areas.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said about the selling of playing fields. He will recall that, about two years ago, I introduced a Bill that expressed regret that playing fields were being sold. I do not believe that we should follow the line of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that no school playing fields should ever be sold. That would be foolish. I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to establish a register which shows the number of playing fields and how many are lost during the year.

While undertaking research for my intended Bill, I could not, regrettably, obtain information from either the Department of the Environment or the Department of Education and Science on how many fields were being lost. We need a national register of the number of playing fields that are available. That is rather different from a register of vacant and derelict land on which there are some playing fields.

Such a register will make us and the Secretary of State aware of the position, and that will force some local

[Mr. Carlisle]

authorities to change their minds about selling, playingfields. It is a sad fact that far too many pitches are being lost despite the admirable campaign of the CCPR and other bodies.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde referred to the community use of playing fields. I must take up the hon. Gentleman on that matter. I declare an interest as Luton Town football club is in my constituency. Its synthetic pitch is used by other clubs in and around Luton and the rest of the country throughout the year. About 18,000 people have played football on Luton Town football pitch this season. I believe that no other club in the country can boast that amount of use. We have used if for show jumping, motor shows, American football and concerts, and it was used for a recent meeting of teachers concerning their industrial action. They went to Kenilworth road and had their meeting on the pitch.

That type of community use is assisted by synthetic pitches. The Football League, the Football Association and some Opposition Members are burying their heads in the sand if they believe that that type of pitch is not to the good of the club and the community.

Hon. Members may say that such a pitch is fine at the lower levels of the sport where experiments can take place, but that is rather like having a horse and not knowing how it will run until it is put into a race. The moratorium of the Football League is wrong because its attitude will stifle the development that is needed to improve the standard and quality of pitches.

If grounds are to become truly community services, as they should, I suggest to hon. Members, who are unfortunate enough not to have clubs with synthetic pitches in their constituencies, that they should understand how such pitches could be used year in, year out, and day in, and day out whatever the weather, with no loss of facilities and without wear and tear on the pitch.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that artificial pitches would encourage community use of grounds, but does he accept that, unless all the league clubs switch over to plastic pitches, clubs with artificial pitches will have an unfair advantage in knockout competitions such as the FA cup?

Mr. Carlisle: The figures relating to Luton Town before this season do not bear out that assertion. Luton Town gained more points away from home than at home. That was extraordinary. This season, Luton is riding high in the first division and it is likely to take the championship. If synthetic pitches are to be a part of our future, as many people believe, clubs should be encouraged to make use of them.

One of the reasons why life is so happy in Luton at present is that people are looking forward to returning their Member of Parliament for Luton, North at the next general election.

As Luton Town football club has banned away supporters, Luton has become a safe place not just for people to come and watch our football team, but to come and enjoy facilities that the town offers on a Saturday afternoon. I am aware that one or two Opposition Members have come to Luton and there is an open invitation for them to come whenever they like to watch a game. There has been not one arrest at the ground all season. Policemen go home before the match begins and children go to matches on their own. There is a marvellous atmosphere at the ground. Our membership scheme and the fact that we have got rid of the element in football that nobody wants has benefited not only the club, but football in general.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde referred to the rate relief for non-profit-making sports clubs. A week ago, four or five heads of major sports, from rugby, cricket, tennis and soccer, went before the Conservative Back-Bench committee to plead their case on the basis of rating relief, particularly for the smaller clubs. I have written to my hon. Friend the Minister about the matter. I believe that it is incumbent upon the Government to consider carefully the basis on which discretionary relief is given or refused. Some clubs, although small in number, do not receive any rate relief from their local authorities, although by statute the local authority is able to give discretionary relief.

I believe that in the forthcoming reform of the rating system, which I welcome as do most of my hon. Friends, it should be written into the legislation that the discretionary relief should be put at a minimum level, very much on the lines of what is happening now in Northern Ireland. There, as the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, a former Minister, will know, some 65 per cent. is guaranteed. We are looking forward to the Scottish system and we are encouraged by the words of the Secretary of State for Scotland when, in a recent speech, he gave some indication that perhaps that type of system may come about and, perhaps more importantly to hard-pressed local finances, that some subsidy will be given in rate support grant.

Some clubs, especially smaller clubs, are suffering from enormous rates burdens which may well put their future in jeopardy. One has only to quote one or two clubs. For example, the rates of the Havant rugby club in Hampshire have gone up from £50 to £2,600, the rates for Eastleigh rugby club, in the same county, have gone from nothing to £1,500 and, without embarrassing my hon. Friend the Minister, he will know that the hockey club in Surbiton is now liable for a £1,645 rate levy and that it is charged £120 for refuse collection. I know that my hon. Friend will be aware of those figures and that they have been put to him, but I hope that he will note the plea, which is genuine. Those clubs are providing for our youngsters and others, in terms of increased leisure, a facility which in some cases is second to none.

Some of the reasons that have been given by local authorities for not giving them rate relief are totally spurious. It is nonsense to suggest that the fact that some of them have bars—in fact, many of them have bars—would upset the local licensees. It is nonsense not to get them rate relief on the basis that some of them have had some connection with South Africa. I assure the House that that is the only time I shall mention it. It is also nonsense to say that sport is only for the rich. I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that if he has any hand in forming legislation or rating reform in the next Parliament, it must be written in to legislation that the clubs must have the minimum discretionary relief and, if need be, that it may have to be credited from the Government.

This is a subject that is not talked about enough. Politicians are not perhaps as conversant as they should be with it. They are not aware of the importance of sport in people's lives, the fact that leisure time will be increasing and that there are many people giving up a lot of time,

most of it voluntarily and unpaid, to try to help our youngsters along the road to fitness and good health. We need to talk more about sport. I congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde on initiating the debate. I hope that some positive measures will be taken and that we shall hear a positive message from my hon. Friend the Minister.

6.23 pm

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): I add my tribute to my hon. Friend and colleague the member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for introducing the debate. We were both elected to the House for the first time in 1970 and he has maintained a keen interest in sport throughout that time. Indeed, in his maiden speech on 26 November 1970 he revealed to the House that he was an ex-ABA boxing champion. Perhaps I should state one or two of my own credentials in this matter.

The first occasion on which I played for the Lords and Commons cricket XI, I was assured by the late Sir Eric Bullus that I had established a club record because I was hit for 26 off one over. In the nature of an arithmetic progression, it was four, two, four, six, four, six. In my own defence I should say that the fifth ball was skied to fine leg and was dropped and went for four. Out of deference, I shall not reveal the indentity or the party of the hon. Member who dropped it.

Should anybody be wondering about my future place in the Wisden hierarchy, I should say that when I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury I could play only in matches that were near the House, so that I could be available in an emergency. I used to give my private secretary the telephone number of the pavilion where the team was playing. On one occasion when I was playing at Vincent square, he rang the pavilion and asked whether it was possible to speak to the Chief Whip. He was told that the Chief Whip was just walking out to bat. Showing the customary loyalty, he said, "In that case, I will hang on."

In the Bristol area we have, through the foresight of the late Alderman St. John Reade, some magnificent school sites in a ring around the edge of the city. He had the foresight to plan the great school sites where the Bristol comprehensive system developed very early on, and they are, by and large, in the centres of large housing estates.

Falling school numbers at secondary level create surplus capacity in land and buildings. My plea is that over-zealous disposal of those assets at this stage is incredibly short-sighted, because once those great sites are redeveloped they are irretrievably lost to future education and community purposes.

To date, the CCPR has been notified of about 577 sports fields and recreational facilities in England and Wales that are disposable. I am not at all happy about the guidance given in 1982 in the Department of Education and Science building bulletin No. 28, "Playing Fields and Hard Surface Areas", which says that if the local education authority decides to sell the land to release assets for other purposes, some of it may be used for the improvement of other playing fields. That seems to be a fairly wishy-washy sort of instruction, because the assets locked up could never be reproduced, except at the most enormous cost, if they were wanted again.

I join the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) in asking for more information from the Government about what assets are available. The 1986 annual report of the south western council for sport and recreation expressed its concern over sports fields being taken over for development. At present in the Avon county area—I am sure that the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) will understand my reluctance to pronounce the word "Avon" in those circumstances, but I have to face the present reality—there are seven sports fields listed by the CCPR and they are threatened with disposal.

The council also expressed its concern at the loss of recreational land that could be used to provide pitches for local football teams. I should mention here the Bristol, South Labour club. I must declare my interest, because I am not only a director but the chairman. I regret to say that no dividend has been paid or is likely to be paid on any occasion in the future. The club has a football team of keen young men and it is difficult to find a pitch for them. Yet, in the area there are secondary schools with large playing fields which, for a large part of the time, are standing idle.

To show the catholic nature of the club, we also have two men's darts teams, ladies' darts team, five skittle teams using the alley during the week, and a crib team. When I was a small boy I could never understand the great interest in the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. I thought it was a national event that everybody hung on. However, now that I am a little older I realise that a small coterie follow that occasion, and that activities such as those at our club are the activities of the ordinary people of this country. Some senior wranglers would be astonished at the mental arithmetic of people who do the chalking up at darts matches. Those things should not be overlooked, but should be encouraged.

Under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 local authorities must register land that is derelict. The CCPR is concerned about that requirement and about school fields that are surplus to requirements. There seems to be a lack of information about what is involved and it is not possible to monitor the exact acreage that is under threat. I hope that the Minister will consider collating or compiling figures so that a more national view can be taken.

Two of the grounds that are threatened in the Bristol area are private or industrial sports grounds. Despite the fact that in 1983 the Minister with responsibility for sport asked the top 100 companies to see whether their facilities could be used for the benefit of the community, if a firm has cash flow difficulties, or wants to raise enough money for expansion, there is a great temptation to sell the land for development instead of giving a higher priority to the community's interests. I hope that this issue will be looked at much more seriously.

In my experience in government, I found that the problem of hypothecation was ever present. As that is a long word to master I shall dwell on it for a moment. It is epitomised by the lack of any cross-departmental thinking. If I may use a local authority example, I am sure that all hon. Members will many times have had the experience of trying to get a young couple rehoused near their elderly parents who need care and attention. They will have pointed out to the local authority that if that change could be made and the young people were near their parents, much of the burden could be lifted from the social and caring services. Even in an individual case, the net saving in money would be substantial. However, the system is so rigid that it is difficult to get those factors taken into account.

[Mr. Michael Cocks]

When the Labour party was in government, the only Minister who managed to break through that barrier was our dear colleague the late Frank McElhone, who represented the Gorbals. He did some absolutely pioneering work for Scotland and was beginning to develop that idea. The House and the nation suffered a great loss by his tragic and premature death, because he was beginning to break down the terrible compartmentalisation that bedevils these problems.

There are problems if the community and the education authorities are using the same premises. However, it is not simply that the playing fields are over-used. There is also the question of the change of accommodation, and who will supervise and care for it and deal with the administration and the lettings. Headmasters are under pressure in many different ways these days and are reluctant to tread in that area and face the problems of dual control, insurance and so on. This is important, and the Minister should consider encouraging his right hon. and hon. Friends to develop the idea that there should be some outside input into and control over premises, because it is not fair to try to foist it all on to the teaching profession. However, if it is done, I am sure that there will be the utmost co-operation and that, where such facilities exist, the communities will benefit enormously.

At the end of the war there was widespread damage and we needed to replace what are sometimes called the "Coronation Street" areas of our cities, where the old Victorian back-to-back houses were no longer adequate. However, when people were moved out to the great housing estates, the sense of community did not travel with them. As Whips are not noted for their culture, perhaps I may be forgiven for quoting two words which I have managed to master and which are used by German sociologists. They are "gemeinschaft" which is the feeling of community and togetherness that one feels in a village and "gesellschaft", which is the loneliness of being in a big town and not knowing anybody. We have the strange anomaly that the loneliest people in the country live in the biggest conglomerations of population.

I am sure that on some of the large estates that were laid out primarily to rehouse people, but which were not provided with the proper facilities, an interdepartmental study of the way in which the work of one Department could help another would make an enormous contribution to bringing a sense of community and togetherness into those areas. That would be an antidote to the problems of rising crime and the violence of which we are all aware.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): The right hon. Gentleman made a valid point about the migration of people from traditional centres. Does he agree that that is one of the reasons for the sadly declining attendances at professional football matches? The grounds are still where the people used to be, but the people are no longer there.

Mr. Cocks: Yes, that is an important point.

I have not mentioned the team in my own area, which is Bristol City, for fairly obvious reasons. Nevertheless, I have been a loyal supporter of that team since 1946.

I finish with a plea to the Minister. He has the opportunity to make his mark, not only in relation to sport, but on the whole issue of community caring and in building up the spirit that is the real answer to the problems of divisiveness and destruction in many parts of society today. Will he please do what he can to encourage all those who have these sites within their purview to resist the temptation to go for a quick cash return and to concentrate instead on how the grounds, which provide one-off opportunities, could be used for the benefit of everybody within the area?

6.36 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): The right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) has just made an important and thoughtful speech. I hope that his points will command the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for the Environment. I had no idea that the right hon. Gentleman was a cricketer of such style and prowess, as we learned at the beginning of his speech.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The right hon. Gentleman is modest.

Sir Edward du Cann: As my hon. Friend points out, the right hon. Gentleman is also modest. Of course, not every member of the Lords and Commons cricket club is as agile or, I suspect, as wily as the right hon. Gentleman. I am told that on one occasion the Lords and the Commons cricket team arrived to play at their opponents' ground, one man short. Therefore, they recruited a young man who was a member of the Marylebone Cricket Club's ground staff, arguing, with impeccable logic, that as he was employed at Lords it was only reasonable that he should play for the Lords and Commons cricket team. So far, so good. He was instructed to field on the boundary. He asked, "Which part?" "All of it," came the reply.

I agree with the comments made by the right hon. Member for Bristol, South—not least with his sensible plea for the abolition of the country of Avon, in the interests of the counties of Gloucestershire and Somerset and of the great west country city of Bristol.

I wish to speak about the single matter of Sunday racing. I declare an interest as a shareholder in and a director of the Taunton race course, which is one of the smallest courses in the United Kingdom. It is also one of the most attractive and is one of only three National Hunt courses in the west of England. That course is typical of the many throughout the United Kingdom which provide great encouragement to all those who love the sport of kings, who love horses, who want to race horses, who enjoy watching horses race and who derive some simple amusement by betting on the results. It is not only one of the smallest courses in England, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) pointed out in his admirable speech, in which he made some important points, it has great difficulty, as do many other small enterprises——

Mr. Rathbone: Such as Plumpton.

Sir Edward du Cann: Yes like Plumpton, it finds the greatest difficulty in remaining viable.

We have only 11 race meetings a year and it is inevitable that more than one is interrupted, if not completely spoilt, by weather conditions during the winter and early spring. It is a hard job to ensure modest profitability.

I should like to pay tribute to all those who work so hard without thought of personal reward to keep those smaller sporting enterprises going. Certainly in Taunton we have hard marvellous leadership — from my late friend, the former chairman of the company, Colonel Mitford-Slade, from the present chairman, Mr. Reading,

from Mr. Dunn, who have been associated with the course for a long time, and from others. I am glad to mention those names because throughout the United Kingdom a multitude of people have not so much a financial interest in these smaller enterprises, as an emotional commitment to their communities and a practical interest in those enterprises.

I agree that we all owe the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde a debt of gratitude for his initiative in securing the debate. He is one of the best liked and most respected hon. Members. Perhaps it is easier to say that when he is not present than to his face, and I hope that paying him a compliment will not do him harm. I hope that his early-day motion 732 will command the support of an increasing number of hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman is right when he says we talk too little about sporting matters.

The horse-racing industry is a great national asset, employing 100,000 people. So expert are our breeders, trainers, and jockeys and so wise our owners that it brings in to the balance of payments no less than £3 million each year net in prize money. Nearly 4 million people attend the race tracks every year and as we have just finished our debate on the Budget, the House will be familiar with the huge sums which are raised in betting duty.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was most wise to abolish on-course betting duty, for which several of us have argued for many years. This will give a much-needed boost to the spectator sport of racing and will undoubtedly be instrumental in making certain that the number of people visiting race tracks to watch will, at least, not decline and may continue marginally to rise. That practical encouragement for the racing industry and the sport is appreciated.

Another problem facing the racing industry is that the United Kingdom is the only major racing country unable to stage meetings on a Sunday because of the present betting restrictions. They are to be found in the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 and to a lesser extent in the Sunday Observance Act 1780. But conditions and attitudes have changed considerably since we passed the legislation of 24 years ago and certainly since the climate of opinion in which the 1780 Act was passed.

Racing is the only major sport in the United Kingdom unable to provide entertainment for the public on a Sunday. It is remarkable to reflect that other events held on Sundays include Wimbledon tennis finals, the final round of the British Open golf championship and of the Ryder Cup, the Littlewoods Cup final, the one-day Sunday cricket league matches—which have given such pleasure to many people and perhaps have saved cricket as a professional sport from extinction—Rugby League matches, snooker championships and the British Grand Prix. It is absurd that in an increasingly competitive environment racing should continue to be deprived of the opportunity to hold meetings on a day of prime leisure time.

I commend to the attention of the House, not least my hon. Friend the able young Minister responsible for sporting events, the report of the working party of the Jockey Club published in January this year. It follows two years study and recommends that there should be a change in the legislation affecting Sunday racing. There is undoubtedly a majority in favour of that and it would be both logical and fair to change the rules. While I appreciate that the prime responsibility for doing that may rest with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can say that that matter will undoubtedly engage the Government's attention and that he will be good enough to report to the Home Secretary the probably unanimous and certainly majority view of the House that that would be sensible.

If the law is changed, not only will a demand be satisfied, but the Government will gain substantially. If the Irish experiment sets a sensible precedent, as I believe it does, the Government would undoubtedly gain considerably more in revenue duties. Moreover, there would be the prospect of additional employment; which is warmly to be welcomed at this time.

The Jockey Club is properly consulting interested parties about this matter. If anyone has anxieties about the effect of the proposal, I believe that it should be relatively easy to agree reasonable working conditions for those involved. Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), were encouraged by a public statement made by the chairman of William Hill on this subject only yesterday.

I agree with much of the speech of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, and my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North commented wisely on tobacco sponsorship. Much as I should like to comment on their speeches, my single point is that this anomaly affecting racing should be removed promptly. If it is, everybody will gain. It is reasonable that the House should unite in saying that in future it will provide conditions for racing which are as fair as those for other spectator sports. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, in whose judgment I have such faith, will be good enough to say that the Government will certainly study this matter in future and come forward with specific proposals.

6.48 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The House may understand that as a Liverpool Member I have listened with particular interest to the three preceding speeches, especially that of the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann). Each year the city hosts the Grand National, so racing is of enormous interest to the people of Liverpool. However, I do not entirely share the right hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for the betting associated with horse racing. The misery associated with betting shops in inner-city areas where people waste their savings, earnings and benefits represents the other side of this argument.

I agree with right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) about the need for facilities and for the Departments that administer those facilities to be better integrated. He touched on a matter dear to my heart when he said that some playing fields which ring the city of Bristol have been disappearing—we have similar fields round Liverpool—and how important it is that they should be safeguarded. That is also true of the beautiful Victorian parks in the city of Liverpool which provide a marvellous open space for recreation and are a great legacy from our Victorian forefathers. We must do more to safeguard them too.

Before that we heard from the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) who told us about synthetic football pitches. In Liverpool, I like to think that we know a little about authentic football although I would not like to say which of the two football teams in Liverpool is the best.

[Mr. David Alton]

Before any of my political opponents accuse me of sitting on the fence, I had better say that this is a good occasion for doing just that.

Like other hon. Members, I want to congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on choosing this very important subject and on giving us the chance to discuss sporting issues. There is a great deal of cross-party support for a number of the points that he made in his cogent and compelling speech. I want to refer to some of the issues that have already been raised and to issues that I have raised on previous occasions with the Minister who is to reply.

There is a desperate need for an integrated and co-ordinated sports policy. I agreed with the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde that it is a tragedy that the "Sports Department"—if I may call it that—was hidden away inside the Department of the Environment. I want to see a much higher profile given by the Government to that important function. That in no way underestimates the Minister's own personal contribution.

There should also be a greater role and more support given to the sports councils. When I was a member of the Select Committee on the Environment, it carried out an investigation into the work of the sports councils and we concluded that they were doing an admirable job. However, we recognised the need for those councils to be given greater support. I met members of the north-west sports council a few months ago when they came to meet representatives from each of the parties. They were led by the secretary, Mr. Roger Pontefract, and they underlined the need for more resources. They said that in the north-west this year the budget of £1·5 million is the same as last year and is, in effect, a cut. Nationally, a request was made for an additional £4 million for inner city areas and that was turned down. The north-west sports council is also concerned about the possibility of water privatisation measures being re-introduced and the disastrous effects that that would have on the north-west.

A colleague of mine, Mr. Chris Davies, from Saddleworth, has been leading a campaign to safeguard Saddleworth Moors for recreation, open space, walking, running and many other leisure activities. As he has said, it would be a great tragedy if those facilities were lost to the nation if they were sold off for other purposes as a result of water privatisation.

The north-west sports council also expressed concern for schemes which will collapse later this year when money will finally run out in the aftermath of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils. The sports council said that this under-provision of funds will come back to haunt us later in the year. I would welcome the Minister's reactions to those worries expressed by the north-west sports council when he replies.

A national strategy and a more dynamic role for the sports councils is needed. However, quite properly, mention has been made throughout the debate to the country's No. 1 spectator sport. On 2 March the Minister will recall that, along with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), I visited him with a delegation from the Football Supporters Association, a Liverpool-based initiative. During the course of our discussions we raised a number of issues. I want to ask the Minister what progress has been made on some of those matters.

We raised the question of mergers and asset-stripping. Has the Minister been able to make any progress on drawing up new guidelines? With regard to the Heysel stadium disaster, he will recall that the hon. Member for Walton and I asked whether he would pursue with UEFA the question of its responsibilities during the course of the disaster. Has he been able to make any progress in that respect? We also raised the question of the need for a new national football stadium. Everyone recognises — the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) has regularly raised the issue—the need for a national sports stadium outside London. Has the Minister given that any further thought?

We raised points about membership schemes, ticket allocation and the need for more facilities for handicapped people, especially at Wembley. We also raised the continuing ban of English participation in European cup competitions. The Minister will recall that we met him before the UEFA meeting in Berne that took place on 10 March. Given the UEFA criticism at that meeting, when it gave as one of the reasons for non-readmission the proposition that the British Government had not taken sufficient or imaginative measures to reassure UEFA about the future conduct of British fans, what is the Minister's response to that fairly serious claim?

The Minister will recall that members of the Football Supporters Association set out a number of other points during the course of the discussions. In its charter, the FSA includes a number of points which should commend themselves to the House. The FSA claims that its aim

"is to achieve representation for its members in all areas of the game where currently their interests are completely ignored. This includes such basic matters as ground safety and comfort. It includes involvement in decisions about where 'prestige' and international games are played. It includes involvement in decisions about ticket allocations for these games. In pursuing these aims, the FSA will act on behalf of its members irrespective of which club, league, national or international association may be involved. The FSA will reclaim the game for its members by using its strength—the membership itself."

In its charter the FSA also state that:

"We will not allow any further alienation of the game's traditional followers—ordinary people who use football at all levels as a recreational pursuit—by fanatics who see it as a duty to resort to violence to uphold allegiance to a particular club or team, or those who see football as a platform to reflect their own individual power or wealth. The FSA will take on the task of restoring football to its rightful owners—the supporters."

In effect, the FSA is claiming that the game belongs to the supporters and not to boards of directors. Many hon. Members would recognise the need to ensure that responsible fans are themselves more fully involved in the policing of the game and in ensuring that discipline is maintained in the grounds. This is a better way of going about things than simply passing more legislation.

I hope that the FSA will continue to be supported and that it will be recognised as a genuine voice for genuine fans and that the Government will ensure that it is not frozen out. Clubs should positively encourage its development. The FSA also raised with the Minister the suggestion that an "ombudsfan" should be appointed with the same role as the local government ombudsman or the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. He would be able to take up complaints and grievances. I think that that idea has something to commend it and I wonder whether the Minister has been able to give it any further consideration.

Having spent so much time on a spectator sport, I want to consider participation sports. As I represent a constituency that is half in the inner city and half in the suburbs, I am especially worried about the lack of proper changing facilities, pitches and places. Young people should be encouraged to participate in sport especially at a time when they have so much enforced leisure time on their hands with so much youth unemployment. However, in a city such as Liverpool where the fastest-growing group is the over-80s and where one in four people are over retirement age, there is also a desperate need to provide facilities such as bowling-greens for the elderly. More special initiatives should be taken in that respect.

There are very few swimming pools in Liverpool for young people. Perhaps we could use unemployed people in the construction industry to provide these sort of facilities. People who have time on their hands, nothing to do and nowhere to go, almost invariably and inevitably fall into the hands of common criminals, into vice rings or the abuse of drugs. It is important to recognise the links between crime and the failure to harness the energies of young people. Great frustration is born out of enforced time on the dole or through living in miserable ugly surroundings such as those described by the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) in the ghastly overspill estates. It is important that we recognise the consequences of there not being places for people to go to and the conditions in which they live.

Mr. John Carlisle: Many hon. Members will have listened to the hon. Gentleman with interest and sympathy on the problems affecting the young unemployed. He will know of the various schemes whereby, for example, reduced entry to swimming pools is allowed to the youth unemployed. The problem in many cases—I am sure that this is so in Liverpool—is educating the youth to use those facilities. Does he agree that many local authorities should take more of a role to provide trained officers through the Sports Council to go to young people and educate them in the use of facilities that already exist, let alone those that might exist in future?

Mr. Alton: I entirely agree. The Sports Council's role as a catalyst—its dynamic role, which I described—is important in providing that type of training. The know-how does not exist in many local authorities, so there is a positive role for the sports council to play. Buildings could be liberated and used for dual purposes. I agree with those hon. Members who have touched on this matter that, far too often, facilities built for health, education or social service purposes are not always released to the local communities for other purposes. There should be much more dual use of buildings.

Last year, I saw the Minister about ice rink facilities in my city. He will be sad to know that the facility about which we talked closed because the resources to maintain it were not available. This means that a city of 500,000 people has no ice rink facility. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and the north-west sports council will ascertain whether there is any way to enable that facility to be re-opened.

There should not be a piecemeal approach to these problems. There is a need for a national strategy and for a lead role for the Sports Council. There is a great challenge, especially in inner-city areas where there are so many young people. Half the 3 million unemployed are under 25, many of them desolate and with pent-up emotions. Sport can provide them with a positive and powerful outlet. It can lead to them remaining healthy individuals and being vibrant people who feel that there is something in life for them. Sport trains them in the idea of teamwork, so preventing them from becoming isolated and embittered. For all those reasons, I am pleased that we have had the chance to debate this important issue.

7.1 pm

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): I am pleased to participate in this debate about sport, which has already been so well contributed to. Sport plays an important part in our national life, as I think every hon. Member who has spoken has said. There is only a limited, although a proper, role for the Government in sport. As my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) put it so well, guidance is one thing; dirigiste intervention is another. I believe that the Government have it about right, and that goes for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey)—as well.

Some would make a contrast and say that eastern European regimes have far more success on the games field and athletic tracks because they intervene much more than we do and provide many more resources than we do for sport. So they do, but this is not eastern Europe. I do not want to live in eastern Europe, and I do not want to live under that sort of regime either, so I think that we shall do our sport our way, even if perhaps we do not always collect quite as many medals as they do.

Government funding of sport is of about the right order. I should not be surprised if some Opposition Members argued about that, but that is certainly my view. After all, in a healthy state of affairs, amateur sport is sustained by enthusiasm and professional sport by the market, including sponsorship. I am prepared to concede, having said that, that there is an important role for grant-aiding facilities and coaching, especially youngsters, but I am bound to say, even when making that concession, that the history of most of the sports that one follows clearly shows that real talent breaks through anyway. I do not know whether Mr. Ian Botham or Mr. Sevvie Ballesteros ever had a Government grant, but I suspect that they did not.

The crisis in sport today is not a crisis of resources. A greater crisis exists in standards of behaviour. I refer to the behaviour of both participants and spectators. The last time that I went to see one of our great, proud Birmingham football teams, the pitch was invaded three times. I was in a fairly safe position but I considered that a very frightening experience, and I would be reluctant to invite anyone to accompany me for an afternoon watching a match if that was likely to happen. Luton football club is to be congratulated. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North has spoken eloquently for the club. Its initiative in issuing identity cards is a proven success and, with the benefit of hindsight, is the obvious solution.

I have been on cricket grounds when that loveliest of games has been played to the accompaniment of banal chanting and waving. I have watched international rugby on television when the crowd has bayed at the place kicker in an effort to put him off. I have watched darts matches when the partisanship of the crowd has gone quite beyond any sense of fair play. Yet, on the other hand—there are always redeeming features in the contradictory pattern

[Mr. John Mark Taylor]

that is our lives—I have seen snooker, that working man's game that has risen to the stars, produce sportsmanship and good humour, losing with good grace and generous winners paying tribute to the losers, which are examples to anyone, especially young spectators. Outstanding, too, have been the professional golfers, who, despite the chill solitude of their sport, have tended, almost without exception, to behave like ambassadors of their game and of good sportsmanship.

Priorities and encouragements are very much part of the portfolio of my hon. Friend the Minister. I hope that he will do what he can to let it be known that there is a priority for sportsmanship and an encouragement for fair play.

7.7 pm

Mr. Bernard Conlan (Gateshead, East): Although I share a common interest with my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), in as much as we both love the game of football, I hope that he will forgive me if I do not deal in any way with that because, like the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), I want to devote the few minutes that I have to a specific subject about which I am very worried—greyhound racing.

Greyhound racing is the No. 2 spectator sport in the country, but it is in decline and great difficulty. In 1960 about 15 million people visited greyhound tracks, but by last year attendance figures had dropped to 3·8 million. I want to say for the benefit of those who have not had the pleasure of visiting greyhound tracks that they are much more than places where people go just to place bets. Most have high-class restaurants, with first-class service. In many there are play areas for youngsters and first-class facilities for social pursuits when the racing is over. In other words, the modern greyhound track is an ideal centre for social enjoyment for people of all ages. These centres must be preserved.

The House is aware that the Horserace Betting Levy Board has been a boon to horse racing. In fact, horse racing has probably been saved from extinction by the horserace betting levy, which was introduced in 1961 when betting shops were legalised. Last year, the amount of money raised by the Horserace Betting Levy Board amounted to more than £20 million. I believe that a similar levy is essential for greyhound racing. Of course, the bookmakers will cry out in great anguish at such a suggestion, but I wonder why? In the end, it is just the good old punter who pays the bill. I must explain to the House that I have no pecuniary interest in greyhounds or horse racing; I am merely a punter who occasionally goes with his family to the greyhound track. I sometimes win a few bob, but more often I lose. Therefore, I speak as just a punter.

Greyhound racing provides between 20 and 25 per cent. of the off-course bookmakers' turnover, and that amply justifies the establishment of a levy. Last year the turnover from off-course betting shops from greyhound racing amounted to £760 million. Of that amount, the sport benefited by a measly £1·75 million. The levy on horse racing amounts to 1·5 per cent. of the turnover, and if that principle were to be applied to greyhound racing, the amount brought in would be a massive £114 million. As a result of such a levy prize money could be increased and that would encourage more people to purchase greyhounds and to become involved in the expense of training and running the animals. Stadiums could be modernised and people would enjoy even greater comforts.

I wish to say a few words about what are known in the racing world as the "Big Four"—Coral, William Hill, Mecca and Ladbroke. Between them those four firms own 4,000 betting shops out of a total of 10,200 shops. Therefore, they own less than half the total number of shops, but the turnover from their shops represents more than 50 per cent. of the total wagered because, in the main, those four firms occupy prime high street sites up and down the country.

The Betting and Lotteries Act 1934 laid down that the owner or occupier of a track could not engage in betting of any kind. Of course, in those days, there was no legal off-course betting. There must have been good sound reasons for the provision in the 1934 Act. However, the Betting Levy Act 1961 legalised betting shops and did not have a similar provision. Consequently, there is a massive loophole in the 1961 Act, because the people who run betting shops can be involved in the ownership and management of greyhound tracks. Therefore, there are bookmakers who own and operate dog tracks. I believe that this is a serious mistake and that the loophole in the 1961 Act should be rectified.

Unlike some people, I do not go so far as to suggest that the dual responsibility of owning and running a track, and at the same time being involved in betting, will inevitably lead to the rigging of odds. I firmly believe that the administration of racing should be wholly separate from bookmaking. It is not the reality that matters; what is important is the public perception of that reality. The administration and organisation of racing must be seen to be wholly independent of the placing of bets and the fixing of odds.

I wish to say a few words about the Bookmakers Afternoon Greyhound Services, commonly known as BAGS. This body was established in 1967 to provide betting information from the greyhound tracks to the betting shops when there was no horse racing because of bad weather. The House will readily recognise that there are many days in winter when there is no horse racing. The betting shops need to meet staff wages, lighting, heating and other overheads, so it is necessary for them to have a substitute for horse racing, and this substitute has been greyhound racing. Although this service was intended to be temporary to meet exceptional circumstances, I am afraid that it has become permanent and BAGS is now operating on most days.

Of the seven tracks that are currently used for afternoon racing, four are owned by bookmakers. Two are owned by Coral and two are owned by Ladbroke. Therefore, more than 50 per cent. of afternoon greyhound racing is owned and controlled by those two bookmakers. I believe that that is extremely unhealthy. The potential conflict of interest has been recognised by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I am delighted that he has decided to refer the matter to the Office of Fair Trading. We will await the outcome of its deliberations with a great deal of interest.

Finally, I wish to refer to Satellite Information Services. I believe that this represents the most serious threat to greyhound racing and, indeed, to horse racing. This service is due to become operative on 1 May this year. The principle is that betting information and pictures will be

beamed directly from the greyhound tracks and horse racing tracks, by means of television and satellite, into the 10,200 betting shops throughout the country. Satellite Information Services is the company that will operate this facility.

I understand that 45 per cent. of the shares of the company are owned by the big four bookmakers, 10 per cent. are owned by the Racecourse Association Ltd. which is restricted to horse racing, and the tote owns 5 per cent. The rest of the shares have not been allocated, but I believe that that allocation will be extremely important. For instance, will the National Bookmakers Association be allocated any shares? About 4,000 of its members have betting shops. They will be dependent upon the service. Will the National Greyhound Racing Club Ltd. be allocated any shares? It certainly should be, because much of the turnover of betting shops will come from greyhound racing.

Those are the weaknesses in the structure of Satellite Information Services, and I believe that the big four have too large an influence in the company. As I have said, it will be obliged to provide a service at a price to all the betting shops. The 10 per cent. share that is owned by the Racecourse Association Ltd. provides a virtual veto on decisions that the association does not like, but no such safeguard is presently provided for greyhound race courses. This a fundamental weakness and I think that the problem should be addressed.

Both greyhound racing and horse racing have a bright and glittering future, provided that the sports are properly organised and that high standards of integrity are maintained. This must surely entail the organisational side and the betting side being kept completely and entirely apart.

It might be alleged that what I have said is an attack upon the bookmakers, but it is nothing of the sort. As a punter—and there are millions of punters throughout the land—I am concerned about the continuing integrity of the sports. Therefore, I am launching no attack on bookmakers. I am merely asserting that the sports will best be served by keeping the organisational side and the betting side completely apart.

7.22 pm

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): If the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) is the Frank Bruno of the Labour Benches, I am delighted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have had the wisdom to call the Tyson of the Tory Benches. I wish only that I had an interest to declare in the match. Regrettably, that is not the position.

I am deeply grateful to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde for providing the House with the opportunity to discuss sport and recreation, and it is especially apposite that the hon. Gentleman concentrated on the problems affecting sport. They are numerous and they spread across the spectrum of sport and recreation. We face problem after problem. There is tremendous potential among our young sportsmen and women and great enthusiasm among the governors of the various sporting bodies and those who work in the world of sport and recreation, but we are not taking up positively the challenge that confronts us on both sides of the House. We must face the challenges and recognise that the time is right for a fresh look at a sport and recreation policy that is appropriate to our time.

There are challenges in three specific areas. First, we need a clearly defined policy for the promotion of excellence in sport. The British Olympic Association is especially well placed to take on more responsibility than at present. Secondly, we must recognise that people have more leisure time and that recreation should be part of a social policy. That means that the Sports Council will have an increased role in working with local borough councils, sports clubs and schools to initiate mass participation. I know that it has already started to follow that road, and admirably so, but we could construct a framework that would give it more assistance in taking that route. Thirdly, professional sport requires our attention and the greater attention of governing bodies that are involved in it.

Professional sport is becoming constrained more than ever by commercial criteria. Restraint of trade considerations are hindering or preventing many governing bodies from controlling their sports properly. Many such bodies are fast becoming bodies of no control. It is extremely difficult for a governing body, acting in the interests of sportsmen and women or the sport itself, to try to stop a sporting event taking place—it may feel strongly that it is not in the sport's interests—if a writ is about to be slapped on it for restraint of trade. The various governing bodies could work together to consider the problem and to assess it in depth.

Boxing, a sport that I know particularly well, could benefit from thrashing out a policy with the cricketers and some of the professionals who are involved in athletics that is in the interests of the sports that they seek to represent.

We should pay tribute to those who have worked for the Sports Aid Foundation and the Sports Aid Trust, which have done so much good work in bringing on youngsters in our society who are in need of financial help with their training and preparation for tournaments. Many of our top stars could never have reached the level that they have attained without the assistance that they have received from the Sports Aid Foundation.

Under the trust deeds, the objectives of the Sports Aid Trust are different from those of the foundation, being concentrated on education and social needs. I should like to see the foundation and the trust concentrating in different areas but working towards the same goal of assisting youngsters. I should like the trust to recognise the importance of getting youngsters to participate in sport, possibly even by financing a coach on a Saturday morning so that people who would not otherwise participate can engage in sport and develop the excellence for which the foundation has always stood. The trust can help youngsters through its charitable status by concentrating on education and social needs. I hope that imagination will now be applied to that sort of initiative to develop participation. As I have suggested, participation should be linked directly to the identification and development of excellence, which is the objective of the foundation and the trust.

The implications for sport and recreation in terms of leisure are far-reaching. I do not believe that sport can be considered only in the context of good health or after-work recreation. We need to distinguish much more clearly between assistance to our international athletes and the promotion of and participation in sport of those of all ages and both sexes within the population.

The Sports Council, operating under a royal charter in 1972, admirably and rightly had an all-embracing role in sports and recreation which was right for the time. I was

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

rather surprised by the comments by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossly Hill (Mr. Alton), who argued that a more dynamic role was required of the council. The fact is that the council concentrates its energies in every sphere of sport and recreation. If by a more dynamic role the hon. Gentleman means a concentration on excellence as well as participation, I disagree with him. I should like to see the concentration on excellence directed far more towards the British Olympic Association, with appropriate financial support. The association could direct itself to national centres of excellence and the Sports Council could concentrate on mass participation. This would lead to the development of a triangle, which would work downwards through the regional councils of sport and recreation to the local boroughs and schools.

Last year, the London boroughs spent £182 million on sport and recreation, which was about 600 per cent. more than the Sports Council's budget. Given the magnitude of spending at local borough level, we should recognise that it is at that level that we should be developing participation in sport and recreation. Many of our school facilities are lying idle. Many school playing fields are under threat of development, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde pointed out. I strongly support the views that he put forward on that matter. I should like to see local initiatives to gain more participation from the grass roots level up rather than trying to impose a structured sport and recreation policy from the top, working down.

I should like to see more money put into local sport by linking local business with local schools and local newspapers. In one area, one could encourage a garage, say, to give a £500 donation to the Sports Aid Foundation for the development of sport and recreation in a local school, enabling it to highlight two or three people or a team and for the local paper to be linked in promoting it. So there is something in it for local business. We would begin by developing sports interest at a local level and bringing on the talent of tomorrow at school level and locally based in local communities.

There are a number of other problems in sport. All hon. Members will pay an enormous amount of respect and tribute to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) for the work that he has done in the Olympic movement. There is not one matter upon which hon. Members have touched that has not been of interest and concern to him during his years of involvement in sport and recreation. In the Olympic world, he has contributed to and participated in some new and imaginative thinking.

I shall add a few comments on which we will not find ourselves in total agreement. I am concerned that we are not looking more closely at a permanent site for the Olympic games. I am concerned about moving the games from one capital to another, with the overt political concentration that inevitably results from the world's press looking in on one site, as has been evident not only in Montreal and Munich but in Moscow and Los Angeles, and will inevitably feature in Seoul.

I am concerned that we are not trying to develop some imaginative thinking about a permanent site—I hope, in Greece. I should like to see it developed along the ideas and the organisational lines of the Vatican State. Greece would welcome the opportunity to be the host country, not least because of the enormous amount of tourism and financial interest that would inevitably develop as a result of having the permanent site of the Olympic games in one country. That matter needs to be looked at further. Otherwise, I fear that the Olympic movement and the Olympic games will not survive our lifetime.

The abandonment of the Olympic Games will be an enormous loss to young people who, once every four years, at the pinnacle of sporting excellence, can get together and compete, not on the basis of any differences in colour, class or creed, but on the basis of respect for each other and the ability to compete as sportsmen.

Equally, I hope that the Olympic movement will recognise once and for all that we must move away from "shamateurism". It involves the idea that someone is an amateur simply because, even though we give them a large trust fund of £100,000 or £200,000 from which they may draw all their living and other expenses, every four years they compete as an amateur. That puts a totally unacceptable onus on a sportsman. We must move towards open games. I am not one of those who say that the moment a sportsman is paid, sport loses its original ethos, the appeal of the de Coubertin ideal, and the appeal of amateurs who used to enjoy sport but are suddenly corrupted as a result of the financial incentive. I do not believe that for a moment.

I do not believe that one achieves sporting excellence simply because one is paid. There is no doubt that Eastern bloc oarsmen are paid a fortune. They are effectively full-time professional oarsmen. There is no doubt that, when they are on the starting blocks of a race, they have everything to lose, and they are frightened of losing. Equally, there is no doubt that when young British eight is put on the starting blocks at the last minute to compete, with all the odds against them—probably even their own rowing association saying, "You will not have the money, you are not good enough to be selected"—they have everything to win and nothing to lose. At the end of the day, the urge to win is in their heads.

All athletes on the starting blocks at international Olympic events are technically superb. It is in their heads that the winners and losers are finally decided on the day. I do not believe those who argue that the moment sport becomes professional and the Olympic games become professional, the Olympic games are dead.

All hon. Members who have attended debates such as this will know that the one subject that I never pass by without a mention is the vital importance of Governments —not only Governments of both political persuasions in this country but Governments abroad—recognising that we have to continue to tackle the drug problem which besets modern day sport. It is nothing short of cheating to take drugs in sport. We should stamp it out with all the strength and commitment that we have at our disposal.

It should be absolutely essential for any governing body to accept random testing as a precondition of accepting Government or other sports grants. There should be random testing of every athlete. The Sports Council, which does admirable work, should be able to attend any training session of a national or international squad and test it. That should be a precondition of receipt of Government grant. We need to tackle drug abuse in sport with all the vigour at our disposal.

I endorse the remarks made about tobacco sponsorship. The voluntary agreement should be tough when we believe that there are important health and social reasons

to make it tough. As long as smoking is a legitimate activity in our society it will be quite wrong to take away the right and the opportunity for tobacco and tobacco-related companies to sponsor sport in this country. It is not just a matter of finance for sport; it is a fundamental matter of liberty in our democratic society.

There is no greater challenge facing those of us who love sport and believe in excellence in sport and participatiom than that which exists in the present education system. There is such a challenge in my constituency. It is exemplified by educationists telling the parents of boys and girls—young primary school kids who wish to compete in competitive primary school football leagues on Saturdays—that they do not believe in such sport because it breeds sexist and competitive instincts. That is not only educationally damaging—this view is shared by many hon. Members — but fundamentally mitigates against every child's inherent wish to perform, participate and strive for excellence in sport. That is especially so in primary schools in which half the football teams are made up of boys and girls. The idea that this breeds sexist instincts is wrong.

We must concentrate strongly on that area of educational policy and attack those who think otherwise. Then, and only then, will the grass roots — the youngsters — have the ability and the opportunity to excel. Only then will we have sports stars in the future and the international status that we have experienced and enjoyed in the past.

7.38 pm

Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier (Sunderland, South): The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) made a thought-provoking speech that covered wide ground. I shall not attempt to refer to his remarks. I intend to keep my remarks brief, as other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on bringing forward the debate. I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government are not sufficiently involved in sport. The fact that the Government do not have a Minister who is directly responsible for sport should be examined closely. A wide field of sporting endeavours could be brought together by using the available resources and ensuring that they are looked after and controlled, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) did.

A number of problems have not been referred to this afternoon. I shall refrain from mentioning football because we are having a tough time in Newcastle and Sunderland. Reference has not been made to the leisure centres that have been established in areas such as mine. They have done a tremendous job for sport. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) said that an ice rink had had to close down in his constituency because the local authority would have been rate-capped if it had tried to keep it open.

Sunderland has a tremendous leisure centre. It provides us with the pleasure of an ice rink, an indoor bowling green, pool, snooker, squash and table tennis. Competitions are run on a regular basis. There are reduced fees for the unemployed and the young. Similar facilities are also provided in Gateshead, and there is another fine centre in Newcastle. These leisure centres have been doing a tremendous job in an area of high unemployment. If they were forced to increase their charges because of restrictions on local government finance, the tragic result would be that people would be unable to afford to use them.

In the winter, old people use their bus passes after 9.30 am to go to the leisure centre in Sunderland. They have a warm day out and enjoy using the bowling facilities. They save money on fuel, and as they reach the centre for nothing, because of the travel concession, it represents a tremendous social wage for them. In the past, when there was just an outdoor bowling green, they had to wait throughout the winter before they could play bowls again, and by then some of them had died. They love their facilities at the leisure centre and their competitiveness is now being seen on our television screens.

The Club and Institute Union and the working men's clubs provide nationwide competitions and facilities. The Minister should try to find out where facilities of that nature are not provided. Local authority facilities are lying idle at the weekend. Given the will, sports facilities could be made much more widely available.

I had intended to say something about greyhound racing, but my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Mr. Conlan) has done such a good job that there is little more that I can add. May I point out, however, that the satellite service that is to be introduced in May will put greyhound racing at a tremendous disadvantage. If *The Times* feels that the story is important enough to get on to its front page and on to two inside pages, there is something to worry about.

If a bookmaker owns tracks and by means of the satellite information service distorts the odds and also tries to squeeze out the body that has governed greyhound racing for the last 60 years—the National Greyhound Racing Club—it should be incumbent on the Minister to find out why. The National Greyhound Racing Club should be involved in the development of satellite information services, but it is not being allowed to be involved. Their tracks are providing income for bookmakers. There is something the matter and it needs to be investigated. I am delighted that the question has been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on initiating this debate. I hope that debates of this kind will take place much more frequently.

7.42 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on initiating this debate. I shall speak about football. Hon. Members know that I have an interest in tennis and that I have been a Wimbledon umpire for a number of years. I enjoy cricket, too, and my height perhaps gives away the fact that I like horseracing as well. I was delighted by the statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on betting duty.

The point that I wish to raise concerns Leicester City football club at Filbert street, and the very courageous way in which it has tried to control crowd hooliganism and abuse on the terraces. The club has just been granted £100,000 to undertake a study of why there is crowd abuse. I gave oral evidence to the Popplewell inquiry. I knew John Fletcher extremely well and was on the same management board with him.

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

Proper membership cards are needed for all football clubs. Membership cards would cost money, but if the club's name was assigned to each member and if their names were logged on a central computer, nobody would be allowed into a football match without his card. If people abuse the system, they would no longer be eligible to go to their own or to any other football club. Regular miscreants would have their names published in the programmes of football clubs. It would be rather like a roll of shame. They would be barred from football matches and it would stamp out some of the problems.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Bruinvels: I should prefer to continue with my speech.

A number of video cameras are in place at Leicester City football club. They have caught some of the major offenders. There are stop-and-search powers to ensure that if people are carrying offensive weapons they are caught as they try to enter the ground. On Friday I hope that the House will approve my Crossbows Bill. A number of people have entered football grounds with crossbows hidden on their person. They are easily assembled once they are inside the ground, and 50p pieces or other coins have been used to take potshots at people on the other side of the terrace. There are also provisions relating to drinking.

The Act that prohibits the sale of alcohol at football grounds is welcome. However, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is probably aware of the loophole that if people go to a motorway service station they can tank up with alcohol at the same time as they tank up with petrol. They can then enter a football ground when they are well over the top. It is nonsense that the pubs surrounding a football ground should not be allowed to sell alcohol just before the start of a football match when supermarkets are able to sell alcohol to football fans before they go to a match.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Bruinvels: That point needs to be looked at urgently.

As for lighting at football grounds, no general provision is made for emergency lighting. Many football matches have been delayed because of a fault in the power supply. We should introduce proper emergency lighting regulations so that in the event, heaven help us, of a major disaster we could ensure, by having emergency lighting at all the exits, that the crowds were properly protected. In the event of an emergency they would be able to leave the ground quickly and safely.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) that there seems to be a general feeling in Labour-controlled authorities that it is a sin to win a match, or a cross-country race, or anything else. That is nonsense. Britain is a competitive country and sport, by its very nature, is competitive. We must encourage and allow competitive sports to continue.

My final point is on sponsorship. I welcome the continued sponsorship of sport, whether it relates to tobacco or alcohol. Ind Coope in my constituency has sponsored Leicester City football club. It is still not winning, or very rarely winning. I would love to see it stay in the first division but I am very fearful for its future at the moment. It has an excellent team under Ian Wilson, the captain. I thank those sponsorship organisations for ensuring that competitive sport continues. Sport is a great recreation. It will not be allowed to die. Britain benefits by its leisure activities.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for giving us the opportunity to place on record the fact that sport is doing pretty well.

7.50 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): May I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on introducing the debate at such an opportune moment. My constituents in Fulham have a particular concern in the problems that are facing sport at the present time. Like the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), I shall refer to the troublemakers who are associated with football, but a rather different group of troublemakers. I shall be talking about those troublemakers who are, in effect, no more than parasites and who have been acquiring football clubs—who are possibly considering acquiring other football clubs and other sporting organisations — not with a view to furthering the interests of the sport but purely with a view to making a personal gain out of exploiting a club's assets.

The affairs of Fulham football club in the last month have painted a sad and sorry picture of a gross act of misbehaviour by people who claim to have the interests of sport at heart, but who have revealed themselves to be crude asset-strippers simply trying to make a large personal gain out of the demolition of a proud football club. Fulham football club has had a long, proud tradition and it has a remarkable tradition of complete freedom from trouble at the ground. People can go week after week to Craven Cottage and enjoy a game of football, in the confident knowledge that there will be no crowd trouble and that there will be a pleasant, happy atmosphere and environment. Yet this club's survival has been put at risk by people who do not have the interests of football at heart but simply see it as an opportunity for property speculation.

Last summer, Marler Estates acquired control of Fulham football club. Despite the protestations of the chairman of Marler Estates at the time who claimed, rather like a wolf in sheep's clothing, that he was coming to save the club's fortunes and to help the club develop its potential and rebuild its fortunes on the field as well as its financial fortunes, it became clear that his long-term objective was property development of the site. Despite that, he gave many pledges of support for the club and its supporters. He gave pledges to myself and pledges in writing to the local newspaper. He said:

"We have already stated that it is our intention to have Fulham playing at Craven Cottage, for the next few years at least."

That was printed in the *Fulham Chronicle* on 27 November 1986.

Imagine the feelings of everyone who cares about the future of football and about Fulham when less than three months later Mr. Bulstrode, the signatory of that letter, announced that he was merging Fulham with Queens Park Rangers, thus ending football at Craven Cottage, and that he intended to build luxury houses all over the site. That

would effectively have killed Fulham football club, when he had pledged three months earlier to keep it going for the next few years at least at Craven Cottage.

That announcement deeply shocked all those who are concerned with sport. Nevertheless, it led to a rapid rise in the share values of Marler Estates, which must have delighted, among others, the chief executive of the company, who had had the foresight to acquire a holding of 15 per cent. of the shares of the company just three weeks earlier.

There can be few more blatant and disgraceful examples of the unacceptable face of capitalism—crude asset-stripping accompanied by gross breaches of faith and bare-faced betrayal of promises. That was against a background which gives me real grounds for belief that there has been insider dealing in the shares of the company. That latter point is not a subject for debate this evening, so I shall say no more. I hope that the Minister with responsibilities for sport will urge his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take rapid action to investigate the affairs of Marler Estates in that respect.

We must focus on the sporting implications. We are in the middle of a fight to preserve Fulham football club against the wishes of Marler Estates to bulldoze the club and build luxury housing over the entire site. Against that, there has been an impressive response from supporters of the club. The local authority organised a remarkably well-attended public meeting—again, completely trouble-free—which showed the strength of feeling of supporters and well wishers of the club to keep Fulham at Craven Cottage. The football league has made clear its opposition to the proposed merger, and to that extent the proposals of Marler Estates have at least been halted.

We need to go further. We need to explore positive alternatives to keep Fulham at Craven Cottage. There is a positive alternative. The club is sitting on a huge potential asset—there is no point in hiding the huge land values—because of the grossly inflated prices in land in Fulham and other inner-city areas. If used positively, such land can provide a safeguard for sporting institutions that have these land assets. The use of those assets to provide redeveloped grounds and improved facilities for the club—possibly with a subsidy to help the club operate in the future if gates are low—is a positive way of looking at the matter rather than simply stripping the assets for private greed.

Two weeks ago, in front of the all-party football committee, Mr. Bulstrode, the chairman of Marler Estates, gave an undertaking that he would explore such an alternative, and members of that committee were pleased to hear it. Despite those pledges, within a few days Mr. Bulstrode was pouring cold water on the possibility and issued threats to sack the staff and players at Fulham. What a dreadful background for the staff at Fulham football club and players to try to keep on playing football, with no certainty that they will have their jobs from one week to the next because of the behaviour of their chairman. That is staggering behaviour from someone who pledged at the end of last year that it was his intention to keep the club playing at the site and safeguarded its future. That behaviour is unacceptable in any walk of life and people who are capable of that degree of duplicity are unfit to control the future fortunes of any football club.

Survival of the club depends on firm action to resist the chairman's intentions. The local authority has shown the way and it led a magnificent campaign to save the ground. I regret that up until now the Government have not shown such enthusiasm and determination, but I gather that today the Minister has taken action to spot-list certain buildings at Craven Cottage, which will put a further obstacle in the path of Marler Estates and prevent a total redevelopment of the site. If that is so, I must congratulate the Minister on taking, albeit belatedly, positive steps in support of Fulham football club to make it clear that we have a combined purpose in ensuring the survival of football and not allowing property speculators to close football clubs.

I hope that the message will go out loud and clear to Mr. Bulstrode, Marler Estates and any other speculators who want to strip the assets of football clubs and other sporting institutions, that we shall not accept it, we shall not tolerate it; there are more important values and we must defend them. We must ensure that clubs are able to continue to play the sport which they are in existence to play and give entertainment to the public. Clubs' assets should be used for the public's benefit, not the personal greed of individual speculators.

7.58 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I shall be brief and endeavour to sit down just after 8 o'clock, but I am pleased to participate in this important debate. Indeed, it is a very important debate and I hope that the Minister will not only take note of what has been said by many hon. Members in all parts of the House but will take action on the valid points that have been raised in such an articulate way.

May I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) on what I consider to be a most outstanding speech from the Back Benches. His knowledge of sport is well known. His contribution to the sports of rowing and boxing is exceptionally well known and I congratulate him on making such an important speech in the debate.

I also pay my respect to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). His involvement in sport is well known and greatly respected. Hon. Members from both sides of the House are united on many issues. Perhaps the message from the debate is that many of the points that have been made are shared across party barriers. My hon. Friend the Minister would be well advised to accept the advice that he has been given by the House.

Let me briefly, in the one or two minutes at my disposal, raise one or two issues that have already been taken up. One relates to local authority playing fields. I share the concern expressed by many hon. Members and by the Central Council of Physical Recreation about what is happening to many local authority playing fields. They are being taken out of sport and developed, and that is wrong. It must be wrong for the local authorities in whose areas they are located and it must be wrong for sport and recreation in Britain, particularly its provision for young people.

I was present at the annual general meeting of the Central Council of Physical Recreation when His Royal Highness Prince Philip made a dramatic speech. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell),

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

a distinguished member of the council, was present, and I hope that that speech has been noted by my hon. Friend the Minister.

I am also deeply concerned because many such sports fields are located in the centre of our urban areas and cities. Once they have been lost, they will be gone for ever. Even if they are replaced, they are replaced many miles away. With transport costs as they are today, it is unacceptable that young people in particular should be expected to go many miles in order to participate in sport of any sort.

I make a plea to my hon. Friend the Minister that he intercede with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the spending of the capital receipts of local authorities. It is outrageous that my authority of Macclesfield should have been forced to borrow money when it had money in the bank from receipts from council house sales, and in the general rate fund from the sale of land and other properties that was not required by the borough council in the foreseeable future. The council should have been able to spend that money to build the swimming bath that was so urgently required in Macclesfield. A further debt had to be incurred which was a liability on the ratepayer, despite the council having money in the bank. For some extraordinary Treasury reason, the authority was not permitted to spend it. I hope that my hon. Friend, representing sporting interests, will take such points on board so that sport does not suffer in this way.

Several sporting clubs in my constituency, particularly the Poynton sports club, are concerned about the amount of money that has to be paid in rates. I hope that my hon. Friend will give emphatic guidance to local authorities that they should use their discretionary powers to grant substantial rate relief — in many cases, 100 per cent. relief. Sport is important. Local private clubs can provide facilities, often much more cheaply than the local authority. Therefore, that is money well spent.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath wishes to speak and I have been longer than I promised, but coming from an area which has the Silkmen football club and many leading lights in the sporting world — Martin Edwards, the chairman of Manchester United and even Hurricane Higgins, the snooker player who has not necessarily always behaved as everybody would wish—I feel deeply involved in sport and I know how valuable it is to the community. Will my hon. Friend take the advice of the House and act?

8.3 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): There is so much to say, and so little time in which to say it, but we have had a wonderful debate. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) summed it up. We are all grateful to my hon. Friend for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for the opportunity that he has afforded us, in conjunction, I suspect, with the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), who also tried for a debate.

What has come out of the debate more than anything else is something which the nation and certainly our colleagues in the House, even more so the Treasury often fail to understand. As the Minister and I know from our rival experiences, and as ministerial colleagues often fail to understand, sport is vital to the life of Britain.

Wherever one looks at present, whether at areas of social stress in inner cities, Britain's general recreation, the evils of unemployment and its enforced leisure, at people who retire earlier and live longer international affairs, Britain's role and the esteem in which we are held in international affairs, are all personified through sport.

When I was the Minister with responsibility for sport I sometimes thought, as I am sure the Minister does, that we were running the Government. I thought that were were running the Home Office over hooliganism. South Africa—mercifully, the hon. Member for Luton, North did not talk about that today—the Olympic Games in Moscow and whether the East was wrong not to go to Los Angeles are matters of international importance. They are all questions understood by the British people through sport. That is why sport is so vital. When we get it wrong, as we do so often on our housing estates and in our inner cities, we pay the price. We cannot fail to pay the price. We either provide facilities for people to enjoy themselves, or we pick up the tab for violence, booliganism and vandalism on our estates and in our communities. We must get the Treasury and everyone else to understand that. So many problems arise from boredom.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) said eloquently that sport is the means by which people express their individual personalities. That is its great contribution to our national life. Sport, and team sport in particular, is the means by which we learn to relate to our fellows — to win well and to lose gracefully. Those are lessons of tremendous importance to the nation.

If ever one goes to Covent Garden, one cannot fail to be inundated by permanent secretaries whom one never sees at Wembley or any of the other sporting mecas. In the British Council's report which came into my hands today, despite its £221 million spending power, there was not one word about sport. There was not one word about how the British Council sees its job of projecting sport throughout the world as a British interest. All its money is spent on cultural pursuits. Nobody objects to its work on the culture front, but it is out of balance, as we so often see in the Treasury and elsewhere.

The Sports Council grant is disgraceful. I do not blame the Minister. He was not present when the grants were decided this year. I prefer to believe that, because he already has a feel for sport. It is ridiculous that the Secretary of State for the Environment should fix the grants without consulting the Sports Council and certainly, if what I have been told is true, the Minister.

Although a two-year grant was decided upon, as the hon. Member for Luton, North mentioned, nobody in his wildest dreams thought that the grant for the second year would not be increased in line with inflation. This has never happened before with any other quango. It is always understood that inflation is allowed for in succeeding years. That is the Sports Council's grievance, and justifiably so.

Many hon. Members have mentioned the British Olympic committee. The committee, according to the information with which it has supplied me for this debate, wants to do a great deal in providing medical services. It should be encouraged to do things in the medical field — psychological and physiological testing, medical screening and so on, for which it does not get a penny.

The British Olympic Association is unique in the world. As far as I can discover, it is the only Olympic association

in the world that does not receive a penny from the Government and pays abnormal taxes out of the money that it raises to send British Olympic teams abroad. That cannot possibly be right and I draw the attention of the Government to it. We definitely need to put that right.

When I was a Minister, I tried to get my colleagues in the Government, and particularly in the Department of Trade, to understand that many other countries recognise the importance of international sports provision. They send ambassadors abroad, they train people, the Government pay money to exert their influence, whether it be China, the Soviet Union, Cuba or any other country. They understand that their influence will be felt as a result of training. Their architects build stadiums and training facilities throughout the world, and that aid through sport is understood, particularly in Asia, Africa and South America, as the means by which they extend their influence. We in this country have not even started to think along those lines. Perhaps I could make common cause with the Minister, because I am sure that he shares these views. He has been abroad with me on the Birmingham Olympic campaign, where his assistance was very much valued. That represented a joint national effort and I hope that we can get more in that area.

We must talk about the decline, because of the cuts in our sports facilities. I had a terribly depressing statistic from the Amateur Swimming Association. Does the House know that 48 per cent. fewer children are being taught to swim now than was the case five years ago? That is the result of cuts in education, the increase in transportation costs and the increase in the cost of hiring swimming baths. That is a disgraceful statistic and it is a disgraceful situation that is facing the country.

We know, too, that the Sports Council is at the moment considering a consultants' report which recommends for example, that the swimming pool at Crystal Palace should be closed. Nothing could be more crazy. It is the only swimming pool in the south of England that is capable of taking international diving and water polo as well as general recreational swimming. I hope that that is kicked into touch. I hope that the Minister will tell the Sports Council not to waste another minute on the question of closing down the Crystal Palace pool. I hope that he will also look into the decline in swimming in our schools, which is a matter of national concern.

I should like—and the House would expect me to do so — to spend a moment praising the revolution in leisure that has been going on in Birmingham. I think that the Minister knows about it. I am glad to see him nod his head. We have got over the problem of not using our schools out of school hours during the week, because immediately 4 o'clock comes, and on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, the control of the swimming baths, the sports fields and the sports halls passes to the leisure department and they are used for general community purposes. There has been a tremendous revolution as a result of that thinking, but I must say to the Minister that if this is to happen throughout the country, political initiative is necessary. Somebody has to take the lead. Somebody has to break the bureaucracy that is stopping us using the facilities that are already there. That is, indeed, what we expect of the Government.

Nothing could be more important than school sport, because it is the foundation stone of all British sport. If people have not developed a love of sport by the time they leave school at 16, if they have not been taught the skills, our national and international sport will be in decline. One need only think of tennis to see the obvious truth of that statement.

I am glad to pay a tribute to the Inner London education authority, because it has been rather maligned, although I noted what the hon. Member for Luton, North said in this connection. I have looked into this matter in some detail and have come to the conclusion that there are very few local authorities doing more for sport, team sport and excellence in sport, than ILEA. For example, it has schools of special ability in cricket, table tennis, lawn tennis, gymnastics, volleyball and basketball. It is one of the few educational authorities that actually bring coaches into the primary schools. It has done a deal with the Surrey county cricket club to bring cricketers into the primary schools to foster a love of sport. That is in every way commendable and ILEA should be praised for doing it.

I know that the deputy chairman, Mr. Bernard Wiltshire, has invited Professor Peter Macintosh to head a working party. What he wants to do, he says, is not drive out team sports, but to make them popular again. It has been reported to me that after all the trouble that there has been with school sport, there is an increase in the number of team sports being undertaken on Saturdays in the ILEA area, and all of us will welcome that.

The Central Council of Physical Recreation has done a tremendous job of work. I speak as a former chairman, although I have worked with it mainly since I left office. I am glad to pay tribute to the council for the way in which it keeps everybody on their toes. Often people in the sports council of this House do not like it, but we need gadflies about in sport, stinging here and there, and if people can defend themselves, they ought not to worry about that.

The council has provided me with a lot of information and I shall quote in juxtaposition two statements about the health and sport of our youngsters in society. First, this is the Home Office in 1986:

> "The Young Offenders Act which established Youth Custody Centres requires two hours per week compulsory physical education training for offenders aged between 15 and 21."

So far so good, but the Health Education Council and Physical Education Association survey of schools in the west midlands said:

> "83 per cent. of children are engaged in less than five minutes' vigorous activity per day."

In other words, if a young person has been sentenced to custody because he is a wrongdoer he will be fitter and have more facilities for sport than if he is in a school. That cannot be right.

One of the most distressing things is the failure of colleges of education to provide physical education teachers. The situation is now reaching crisis proportions, and this is something that I hope the Minister will look into, especially as so many PE colleges have been closed down. I am thinking of those at Dartford, St. Luke's, Exeter and Nonnington, Kent. This is a serious matter. There is now a shortage of PE teachers within the teaching profession, and it is important that we pay some attention to the situation. I hope that the Minister can use his influence with his colleagues in another Department to get them to understand the situation.

With regard to the Sports Council, I took note of what was said earlier about keeping a balance and not interfering too much in sport, I did not support the royal charter when it was first issued to the Sports Council, but I believed that it was there to protect and maintain its

[Mr. Denis Howell]

independence, particularly from the Department of the Environment. I am worried that increasingly the Sports Council seems to be becoming sucked into the Department of the Environment. I hope that the Minister will tell us what Mr. Teasdale is doing now that he has been seconded from the Department of the Environment. I know that it is only for a short time and that he will be going back, but he is now working full time.

Mr. Teasdale has done some good work in his time, and I am not casting any personal reflections on him, but he ought not to be there; he ought not to be in an institution with a royal charter. We can all imagine what the BBC would say if suddenly it was told to take on an official from the Home Office who had been in charge of broadcasting. If that happened there would be uproar throughout Britain. A royal charter ought to be as honoured and as hallowed in sport as it is in broadcasting. I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say about that.

About 550 school playing grounds are up for sale. This is disgraceful. If the school population is going down, the youth population must be going up. If some school playing fields are not fully used, they should be taken over for use by the community. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) and other hon. Members who talked about the vital importance of football and football clubs. We must ask the football authorities to look at their regulations, because nobody should be able to corner any of our football clubs. Shareholding should be strictly limited.

I hope that local authorities will use their powers to prevent planning applications that change the nature of football clubs. Grounds in the middle of our built-up conurbations must be protected as lungs. If the football clubs leave their grounds, they should be used by the local authority for general sport and recreation—even if it is necessary to make a compulsory purchase order. I am now dealing only in headlines. VAT on sport and rates are important subjects for discussion and we shall have to come back to them. In the context of tax on sport, I ask the Minister to ensure that British sport does not suffer compared to European sport. We entered the European Community because we believed in harmonisation, but we are not getting harmonisation in British sport. There is no time to talk about Playboard, but I hope that the Minister will do what he can about that.

Many hon. Members have spoken about violence in sport. Anything that is unlawful on the streets of Britain must be unlawful on the playing field, and administrators, referees and everyone involved should make sure that that is the case. I believe that Sunday racing will come. The two correspondents Brough Scott and Richard Baerlein have written about this and the only thing that I add to what they have said is the advice that I gave the Jockey Club when we met its representatives in Committee—do not get mixed up in Sunday trading. This is Sunday sport, and should be treated as such. Certainly there should be negotiations with the trade unions, which have every right to be fully consulted.

Again I thank the Minister for supporting Birmingham's Olympic bid. That bid has produced about £60 million in investment in the city, so we have had a very good return, which shows the importance of the international role of sport. The Government ought to think again about financial support for Olympic and Commonwealth initiatives, and it is important for the Government to be seen to do so. Sport is vital to the life of the community.

I calculate that it is five years since the House last discussed sport. I hope that we will discuss it much more frequently in future, because all hon. Members are united in the view that one of the essential purposes of sport is to unite the nation. We agree on that, whatever other divisions we might have. Thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, this debate has shown that hon. Members in all parts of the House are united in declaring the importance of sport and are determined to see that it gets a fair deal from Governments of any colour.

8.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I congratulate hon. Members on a good-natured and interesting debate on this important subject. There has obviously been a great deal of cross-party agreement. I certainly congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) who in his usual good-natured way has raised a whole range of topics and given the House a good opportunity to discuss the important subject of sport in our nation.

The hon. Gentleman began by saying that we ought to have more debates on sport. I would welcome that, too, and only three weeks ago we hoped to have such a debate when my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) put down an excellent motion congratulating the Government, the football authorities and the police on their work in combating football hooliganism. That was to follow a debate on the inner cities, but because of some rather lengthy speeches by Opposition Members I am afraid that we did not reach that motion. It would have been a great opportunity to discuss sport but we could not take it up on that occasion.

In this debate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said that he wished for more Government involvement. Perhaps he suggests that I have some bigger job. I consider that I have been greatly involved. I have now been doing the job for less than 18 months but in my first year I attended well over 400 sports events, even though I was not able to make a great number of speeches in the House about sport. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) was in the job for 11 years and certainly managed to extend into wind and water. He seems to be quite renowned for stopping or starting the rain—I forget which it was.

In the context of more Government involvement, my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) said that the Government get intervention in sport about right and I think that that view is widely held by my hon. Friends. We also get financial involvement about right. I agree with my hon. Friend that we do not want some kind of Eastern European involvement in sport because along with that sort of attitude come various other attitudes that are certainly not desirable. I think that the right hon. Member for Small Heath would agree that the governing bodies of sport would not wish to see the kind of intervention that would follow the much more dirigist policies followed in sport by eastern European countries.

The debate focused on the problems of sport. Not surprisingly, many points were made about finance. One of the most compelling problems facing sport is behaviour on the field of play. Many hon. Members spoke about that

and, as is well known, the Government are doing a great deal about crowd violence. From time to time we talk to the governing bodies and ask them to exercise better control over players. Late in the debate my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) spoke about drug taking. I shall return to that later in my speech.

First, I shall deal with the problem of crowd violence that is associated with football. We are well aware of the disastrous effects that a minority hooligan element has had in recent years on our national sport. That has had disastrous consequences for our country's reputation and for our prestige abroad. That is clear from the attitudes that continue to be taken by the European football authority, UEFA. Regrettably, football-related hooliganism is not the sort of problem that lends itself to an immediate or single solution. Through our partnership approach we have worked hard to develop a package of measures designed to ensure public safety and the future well-being of the game.

Crowd disorder at football matches is not a new phenomenon. Football is a physical sport that has traditionally aroused passions and emotions on the field and in the stands. In recent years football has witnessed a truly tragic shift from rowdy but largely good-natured behaviour amongst spectators to appalling acts of violence. I pay tribute to clubs such as Luton and Leicester —raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels)—and so many other clubs such as Watford and Wimbledon which are doing what they can to combat this unfortunate hooliganism. The Government and the football authorities have introduced far-reaching measures to clamp down hard to try to wipe out hooliganism.

The Government have introduced stringent controls on the sale and possession of alcohol inside grounds and on transport to fixtures. We are providing the courts with powers to ban troublemakers from attending matches and we have tightened up fire and safety requirements throughout the Football League. The Football Association has revised ground regulations and has tightened up on disciplinary procedures. We have seen the first-class effects of installing closed circuit television throughout the first and second divisions, and the Football League is now proceeding to install that facility, with the valuable help of the Football Trust, in the third and fourth divisions. We believe that we shall see further improvements in the behaviour of football supporters across this country because unless there is a deep-seated improvement, the prospect of our English clubs returning to Europe are dim and distant. I appeal to the spectators to remember that football relies for its reputation very much on their good behaviour.

I pay tribute to the work that is being done in the clubs to bring back local community involvement. That very important work touches closely on the community involvement in general that was so well addressed by the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) in his excellent speech. It was good to hear what he had to say about what should be happening in the community, with sport very much as a driving force, and I hope that more clubs will be able to do this.

I share the views expressed by several hon. Members that it was a short-sighted approach by the football authorities when they put a moratorium on artificial pitches. Recently, for a whole day, I was present at Preston North End where the chairman was beside himself with frustration at the action that had been taken by the Football League when he, the chairman, was doing all he could to attract revenue into his ground at Preston North End.

I saw that pitch, during the whole day that I was there, being used by the schools and by various members of the community. I understand that the ground is hired by fathers for birthday parties for their sons. We should be seeing that sort of spirit in football clubs throughout the country. For the moment that effort has been cut short by the football authorities, but I hope they will think again about it.

The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) raised —not surprisingly—the question of mergers of football clubs and the threat of redevelopment at various football grounds. I would find it always deeply saddening if an historic club were to lose its home and its link with the local community. We need to keep some sense of proportion about this issue.

Football clubs are private companies limited by guarantee. It is for their directors to decide who they should respond to market pressures if they are to keep in business. Football clubs have to move much closer to their communities if they are to survive. Only a handful of clubs are in the black, and too many football clubs are seriously in the red and beholden to the banks.

The Football League should address the question of mergers and shareholdings through their regulations. That view is shared by the right hon. Member for Small Heath. The League must carefully scrutinise applications for registration and re-registration so that they can truly take care of the game that we proudly say is our national game.

There is some light on the horizon for Fulham football club. This matter was touched on by the hon. Member for Fulham—who was slightly cynical in his remarks—and I was grateful to hear him acknowledge that today my right hon. Friend, following advice from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, has formally listed as buildings of architectural and historic interest several of the buildings and structures surrounding the pitch, which date from 1905. That is an indication of the particular interest that the Government have taken in Fulham football club, this historic ground, Craven Cottage and the related stand accommodation which is part of the heritage of football.

I now turn to the loss of recreational ground and pitches. We have to keep this in proportion. Today there are approximately 160 more swimming pools and 600 more sports halls than in 1979 when this Government were first returned to office. Between 1982 and 1985 there were created 127 new natural turf pitches, and a further 50 synthetic all-weather pitches have been laid since the early 1970s. This is an indication of a very important growth of resources for mass participation in sport in this country.

I am pleased that the Sports Council has formed a joint working party with other interested groups to consider ways of co-operating and protecting recreational land. We desperately need accurate statistics of these related problems. My Department will be looking closely at the results of the working party and at any recommendations made by it.

Loss of playing fields was mentioned by the hon. Members for Stalybridge and Hyde and for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). In recent times it has been brought to my attention that Labour authorities in Ealing and Brent are planning to build houses on playing fields.

[Mr. Richard Tracey]

Will the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde be able to do something about that? As to the point raised by the hon. Member for Mossley Hill, I bring to his attention a problem in my borough of Kingston upon Thames where the Liberal-SDP council is also planning to build houses on two sports playing fields. I have taken up that matter with the chairman of the recreation committee and I have chided him, this very day, on returning to me just a one-line reply—when I asked for reassurance—saying that he has taken note of my comments. More than that is required before the Opposition party can tell the Government that they ought to be doing more about this disgraceful situation to which we are addressing ourselves.

Coming to finance, the Sports Council grant has been mentioned. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman was being somewhat mischievous when he suggested that I was in no way consulted by my right hon. Friend about the sports grant. The truth is that the Sports Council last year received the biggest increase that it has ever had—£6·372 million—and it was told at the time that that was an increase for two years. That was a real terms increase of 16 per cent.

It is no good the right hon. Member for Small Heath complaining. When he left office, the Sports Council grant was £15 million, and it now receives £37 million, a real terms increase, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said from the Dispatch Box, of 42 per cent. during the period of this Government. That is perfectly good evidence of the first-class support that we are giving to a strengthened Sports Council.

In my time as Minister responsible for sport I have strengthened the Sports Council by introducing the regional chairmen. We now have a flow of information on sport from our regions so that we are involving the local authorities, who are members of the regional sports councils, in communication with us here at the central Sports Council. Local authorities can give sports clubs a 100 per cent. rates discretion, any rebate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North spoke about tobacco sponsorship. It seems that there is some difference on the Opposition Benches about that. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is against it, and the right hon. Member for Small Heath is in favour of it. We have a balanced approach, as we have in all matters of sport, and as we shall continue to have.

I am grateful for the opportunity to set out again the Government's dedication to the sport of this nation which we consider so important to our people.

Industrial Relations

8.43 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I begin by apologising for the state of my voice. Yesterday, I was visiting nursing homes in my constituency and the combination of the deafness of the inmates and my attempts to communicate with them has resulted in my finding it difficult to address the House. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of trade unions and industrial relations. I believe that it is of great importance as we discuss the next step forward in the Government's plans for trade union reform.

In May 1979, the Government were presented with a situation of chaotic trade union power and militancy which had been encouraged by labour legislation between 1974 and 1976. The unions had excessive bargaining power which led to wage demands far outstripping inflation. Strike was the only response and trade union immunity from legal action had been so extended that as a result industrial action was licensed even if it were directed against those far removed from the dispute.

While there has been much play from the Liberal party and elsewhere that we should not dwell on the events of the period 1977-79, my right hon. and hon. Friends should spend some time considering those matters as they consider their plans for the future. It is constructive to remember that in 1977 a Gallup poll showed that 53 per cent. of the population believed that Jack Jones was more powerful than the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), who was a much younger man then. Some 76 per cent. thought that the country was in a serious economic difficulty and, despite the Lib-Lab pact, 73 per cent. thought that the Liberals had little or no influence on Government policy.

I must not dwell on those unhappy times. Suffice it to say that matters came to a head in 1979 with the infamous winter of discontent when the myth that Labour could work with the unions was finally laid to rest. Action taken by workers involved strikes in the motor and haulage industries, bakeries, on the railways and in local authorities. Cancer patients were turned away from hospitals, refuse was piled high in the streets, while pickets blocked entry of food into our ports. Ambulance men threatened to refuse to answer 999 calls and, in Liverpool, even the dead lay unburied.

The Prime Minister of the day openly admitted that the Government were impotent to reduce unemployment. Mrs. Williams cheerfully admitted that there was "no real answer to the rising youth unemployment." Today, she tells a different tale.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House precisely what the unemployment figure was when the last Labour Prime Minister made that statement? If he cannot tell us, I will tell him. It was 1,300,000. It had come down every month since 1977. Would the hon. Gentleman care to tell us what the unemployment figure is now, after eight years of Tory Government?

Mr. Forsyth: I can do rather better. I can tell the hon. Gentleman what a Minister in his Government said in 1978, writing in the *Glasgow Herald*. One of his colleagues predicted that there would be 3 million unemployed within five years and said that to blame any Government for that did not get us very far. He went on to demonstrate that

it was part of the demographic effect. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will be able to confirm that a Minister in their Government predicted that there would be 3 million unemployed. Under his Government, unemployment doubled and the leader of his party claimed that they were impotent to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): What about unemployment now?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman should read the writings of his colleague the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), who was quite authoritative on that matter.

When they were elected, the Conservative Government were determined not only to tackle the problems of unemployment but to restore the balance of industrial relations between the employers and the trade unions, which had been so distorted under Labour. They also wanted to make union leaders more accountable to members.

With all the talk from the Liberal-SDP alliance of the need to have pacts to moderate Governments, the period of the Lib-Lab pact did not restore Britain's economic fortunes or bring the trade unions to heel. The pact's aims were to make some progress in devolution, to get direct elections to the European Parliament under proportional representation and to get through the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act. Only the last of those aims was achieved, with a shoddy, ill-drafted measure which has created immense misery and the effects of which every hon. Member has to face in every surgery every week. That was the sole achievement of the Lib-Lab pact other than maintaining in office a Government that went on to nationalise and preside over a disastrous period in industrial relations.

The price of that pact was trade union militancy, spiralling economic decline and the winter of discontent, 10 million working days lost during 1979 and the spectacle of Mrs. Shirley Williams on the Grunwick picket line. Despite that, the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), as recently as 3 December 1986, said:

"that was one of the best periods of Government that Britain has had for a very long time." — [*Official Report*, 3 December 1986; Vol. 106, c. 1039.]

I hope that in the forthcoming election, whenever it comes, the alliance will not be promising us that.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware of the efforts that have been made by the Government through existing legislation. As one who has been cynical about the step-by-step approach, I must admit that it has been an immense success. So far, we have removed legal immunity from unions when taking certain unacceptable forms of action such as sympathy strikes, blacking and picketing away from the place of work. We have provided public funds for ballots of trade union members on such issues as strikes, election of officials and amending union rules. We have made unions liable to injunctions for damages when they are responsible for unlawful industrial action. We have made the legal immunity of trade unions in organising industrial action conditional on holding a secret ballot to be held before the trade unions endorse a call for action.

We have ensured that every voting member of the trade unions' governing bodies is subject to election directly and by secret ballot of union members once every five years. We have given union members the chance to ballot every 10 years on the continuance of the political fund. We have compensated those who were dismissed from closed shops between 1974 and 1980 and provided for a regular review by secret ballot of closed shops. We have given employers the possibility of dismissing, without having to face unfair dismissal claims, those taking industrial action, provided all those taking part at a particular workplace on a particular day are dismissed.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House who elected the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) as vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland?

Mr. Forsyth: As the hon. Gentleman is always at pains to diminish the influence of the Scottish Conservative party and the nature of its influence in Scotland, I find it surprising that he should seek to compare the question of democracy and accountability of the trade unions to the internal workings of a political party. However, looking at his own party's record in the Division Lobbies, I can see that it does not treat it with the same seriousness as I do.

Our legislation has succeeded in its aims, not only of restoring a balance to industrial relations but in making trade union leaders more accountable to their members. It is no coincidence that the number of strikes has recently been at its lowest for nearly 50 years. For example, the National Union of Railwaymen voted three times against any strike action between August 1985 and July 1986 in defiance of its leadership. Under the previous Labour Government, working days lost through industrial unrest reached 29·5 million in 1979 alone. The figure for 1986 is 1·9 million.

Mr. Evans: What about 1984?

Mr. Forsyth: The miners' strike of 1984 showed only too clearly the need for legislation, coming as it did before the Trade Union Act 1984. The Prime Minister said at the time that it was "a dispute about the right to go to work of those who have been denied the right to go to vote."

That right ought to have been guaranteed to them by the National Union of Mineworkers' rules. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) may make no justified criticism of the Conservative party in implementing its own rules, but I should like to think that he would criticise the way in which the NUM behaved in terms of failing to implement its rules. Had they been followed, a national strike could have been entered upon only as the result of a ballot vote of the members, with the support of a simple majority of those voting. However, Mr. Scargill continually refused to hold a national secret ballot. The issue of a secret ballot dominated the strike and showed the Labour party's contempt for union democracy.

Better industrial relations have been recently reflected by the growing number of long-term pay settlements, often secured in exchange for more flexible working practices and no-strike agreements. For example, the Electrical, Electronic, Plumbing and Telecommunications union has negotiated such deals with Sanyo, Toshiba and Hitachi. The Green Paper represents a further step forward in that process of giving rights to trade union members. I particularly welcome the proposal to give union members the right to restrain their union from authorising or endorsing industrial action involving a breach of employment contracts where a union has not obtained majority support from those taking part in the action in

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a strike ballot and the right for union members not to be subject to disciplinary measures by a trade union for refusing to take industrial action.

The Wapping dispute serves well to illustrate the necessity of those measures. If they had been in force at that time any SOGAT wholesale worker could have obtained an order restraining his union from calling a strike without balloting the wholesale workers—which is what SOGAT failed to do. An individual member could have saved his union from financial ruin. As Brenda Dean, general secretary of SOGAT, said in the *Financial Times* on 20 February 1987:

"the lesson for me is that you can't postpone change, and you certainly can't stop change. If you attempt the results are so often much more unpleasant for the very people one is trying to protect."

If only those who have positions of authority in the trade unions in the Caterpiller factory had followed that advice. Yet again, we see the dinosaurs of the trade union movement leading the workers up a blind alley at considerable cost to their families.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): The Secretary of State for Scotland condemns the Caterpiller Tractor Company and criticises the men for the action they have taken. The men were provoked. They were promised a £62·5 million investment and then after three months the whole factory was thrown into disarray and 1,221 men lost their jobs. What would the hon. Gentleman, as a man with any backbone, do in a situation such as that?

Mr. Forsyth: The first thing I would do would be to ensure that the workers were given a secret ballot to decide what sort of action they should take.

Mr. Hamilton: There was a secret ballot at the outset.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman knows that there was considerable dissension among the work force on the question of continuing the occupation of the plant. By refusing to give the work force a secret ballot on the decision to continue the occupation of the plant, I believe that the trade union members responsible showed a degree of irresponsibility that was, to say the least, worrying. The consequences for those men will be that their families will be poor and the prospects of finding an alternative use for the plant are that more remote.

There are far too many people in the Labour party who are much more concerned about leading great crusades and winning headlines than about looking after the long-term interests of the work force. That was reflected in the conduct of those who refused a ballot for the work force. I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland's criticism of the management, but, at the end of the day, the only way in which the dispute will be settled is if the management and the trade union representatives get round the table and get the best possible deal for the work force to secure the future of the plant. One does not do that by indulging in sit-ins and pyrotechnic displays for the benefit of the media.

In considering the Green Paper, I believe that the statutory duty on trade union trustees not to apply union funds in contravention of the terms of court orders is a vital measure. In the light of the experiences of the past few years, the right of trade union members to inspect their union's detailed accounts is also important.

Further steps to remove trade union immunity from industrial action to establish or maintain a closed shop are important, as is an extension of the statutory election requirement to cover the election of all trade union executive members, presidents and general secretaries. That measure would prevent people such as Mr. Scargill from waiving their voting rights in return for a seat for life on the committee. It is also important to provide a new commissioner for trade union affairs to pursue any improvements in the conduct of elections, as identified by a certification officer.

The legislative programme of the Labour party is deliberately designed to enhance trade union power in Government and society. The Labour party is committed to repealing all the trade union legislation that has been introduced by this Government. The TUC-Labour party document on industrial relations entitled "People at Work: New Rights, New Responsibilities" gives details of the Labour party's proposals.

Mr. Evans: It is a splendid document.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says that it is a splendid document. I am glad that he is prepared to endorse it because its

"new framework would in no way give employers, or their customers or suppliers, any opportunity to seek damages agains unions."

In addition, there are plans to legalise secondary picketing and secondary action and to strengthen the closed shop.

Mr. Evans: It is all about democracy.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says that it is all about democracy. However, the document states:

"any future legal framework must include provisions encouraging trade union membership".

In other words, it seeks a coercive closed shop and to end pre-strike ballots. The document continues:

"trade union members also seek and expect rights to secret ballots on strikes . . . (but) not necessarily before a strike . . . but within a reasonable time if the strike continues."

It is difficult to find out what the alliance parties believe. However, if one considers their record, none of the SDP leaders voted against any of the trade union legislation that was introduced between 1974 and 1976 by the Labour Government. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) voted against the Employment Act 1980. The alliance split three ways on the Employment Act 1982. Liberal Members and 17 SDP Members voted for its Second Reading, while five SDP Members voted against it. A further five Members of Parliament abstained or were absent. Liberal Members also voted for the Third Reading, while the SDP abstained with the exception of their then employment spokesman who voted against it.

In its document entitled "Industrial Relations: A Fresh Look", the SDP argues strongly for positive rights for trade unions and includes proposals to undermine the effectiveness of pre-strike ballots and to reinforce the closed shop. Pre-strike ballots would no longer be compulsory and would be required only when at least 10 per cent. of the work force involved demanded one. To establish a closed shop only 66 per cent. of the work force would be needed to secure approval. Subsequent reviews of the closed shop would be held only if a set proportion of the work force demanded them.

I have no desire to dwell on the policies of the Opposition parties. Suffice it to say that they would take us back to the period of the Lib-Lab pact, remove the rights of trade union members, and restore power to the trade union barons.

Mr. Bruce *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) shakes his head, but I refer him to a comment made by Lord Grimond in July 1977. He had some worries about the Lib-Lab pact and showed a certain perspicacity because his prediction came to pass. He said that he was worried that the pact might

"entrench a Conservative closed-shop type of bureaucratic Socialism"

which would mean the death of Liberalism forever. His prophetic words have come to pass.

I congratulate my hon. friend the Minister on the success of his policies. I urge him to press ahead with the Green Paper proposals. Britain has been transformed from the mayhem of the Lib-Lab pact into a country in which the number of working days lost is the lowest since 1963, and less than one fifth of the days lost in 1977 and 1978. During the Government of the Lib-Lab pact, there were 4,300 disputes, with the loss of 15·9 million working days. Opposition Members cannot escape that, because that is their record.

Today the CBI forecast record orders and prospects for our country. The budget of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor offers hope of a complete transformation in our economic position,. None of that would have happened under a hung Parliament or under the policies of Opposition Members, and they must face up to that. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to continue with the step-by-step approach and to take some wider steps.

9.4 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Perhaps I was a little naive to think that we would have a constructive debate on trade unions, especially as the debate was initiated by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). We certainly had an extraordinarily wide-ranging speech from him and one or two of his points deserve some response.

In his rather selective way, the hon. Member tried to draw conclusions from a period some years ago. I do not propose to go over that period, other than to point out that unemployment and inflation decreased and that for a short time there was a degree of stability in the economy which had not been there previously. There was also the appointment of the first-ever Cabinet Minister for small businesses. *[Laughter.]* It is interesting that Conservative Members find that amusing. Many small businesses appreciated that development and would like to see a Cabinet Minister with similar responsibility in the present Government.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): How does the hon. Gentleman define stability in the economy?

Mr. Bruce: Perhaps stability was the wrong word, but inflation, interest rates and unemployment all decreased and the economy moved in the right direction. If a Conservative Government had presided over that, they would have been pleased to boast about it. The Minister knows perfectly well that the ensuing winter of discontent arose against our advice, when an election should have been called and the matter resolved.

The hon. Member for Stirling picked on events that happened at a given time and blamed them entirely on the Government of the day. As he referred to the miners' strike I presume that he will not object to the Government accepting responsibility for that. Many working days were lost then. We have had riots at Wapping and in Birmingham, Liverpool and London. All that has happened under the Conservative Government, who therefore stand indicted for it. I am not as uncharitable as the hon. Gentleman in assuming that all those matters are the direct responsibility of the Government, but the Government certainly had a hand in creating that unrest and provocation. Indeed, when historians consider this period of government, they will not see it in the spirit of Nirvana in which the hon. Gentleman wishes us to dwell. The electorate is capable of making its own choice.

The Conservative Government's great concern with the details of the democratic process within trade unions has been of considerable benefit to some trade unions. Indeed, I have supported several of their measures. But they are selective and it is extraordinary how keen they are on the nitty-gritty detail of trade unions while they refuse to countenance any legal regulation of the City. Indeed, it seems that Mr. Gorbachev will be elected Secretary of the Communist party of Russia before the chairman of the Conservative party is elected. If Conservative Members are so concerned about democracy, it would help if they were consistent about it.

If the hon. Gentleman talks seriously, as I do to people involved in industrial relations, he will find that the type of sentiments he expressed are not greeted with great enthusiasm by employers, but are regarded with considerable anxiety.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): In an intervention and again now, the hon. Gentleman has commented on the way in which the Conservative party runs its affairs. I imagine that he has studied the matter in some depth because he seems to know about it. Does he realise that the majority of officers of the Conservative party in Scotland are elected, that the chairman and vice-chairman who are appointed are responsible for the management of central office and that all the elected officers run the associations throughout the country?

Mr. Bruce: I am not sure what that system is, but it is certainly not democracy. It seems extraordinary that the only jobs to which one cannot be elected are the top jobs which have the highest profile. The hon. Member for Stirling must address some serious points. If he believes that the climate and the tone of his speech are likely to improve the spirit of industrial relations in this country, he is very much mistaken. It has become fashionable under this Government to attack trade unions to such an extent that the positive, constructive and essential role that trade unions play has sometimes been obscured. Employers with large work forces simply would not be able to operate without the co-operation of trade unions. They are an essential means of communication and they have helped to improve working conditions and health and safety at work.

The alliance certainly accepts that in recent years there have been abuses of union power. We stress that they have been contributed to by weak and ineffective management. We have therefore proposed democratic reforms including the wider use of postal ballots and we believe that it is

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important to ensure that trade unions become effective vehicles for change because change is taking place and must take place.

I fear that too often Tory legislation has been motivated by the kind of anti-union sentiment that we have heard from the hon. Member for Stirling, purporting to be concerned with improving the accountability of unions and giving them back to their members, while generally trying to undermine their ability to be effective. The worst example of that was the banning of trade union membership at GCHQ even in circumstances in which the union was prepared to co-operate and offer a no-strike agreement. That has upset many moderate people in trade unions who were disgusted that trade union members at GCHQ should have been treated in that way.

The other problem is that the shift of power away from employees to employers in the past eight years has given some unscrupulous employers — fortunately, only relatively few employers — an opportunity to take advantage of the new laws to undermine the use of the strike weapon, to break contracts unilaterally and to use the law to sack workers and deny them what might be regarded as reasonable rights.

The alliance takes a view that is not peculiar to the alliance Benches. That view is certainly widely held among employers' organisations and those involved in negotiation and arbitration outside the House. We believe that the Government should proceed cautiously at the moment. Many people feel that progress has been made. I accept that there has been an improvement. However, we now need time to allow things to settle down. Some equilibrium has been achieved, and many people are concerned that if the Government go too far down that road, that will create a backlash in the atmosphere within many organisations which could sour the progress that has been made. The Government must take that point very seriously.

I also believe that if further reforms are to be introduced, they should be put into a context of extending industrial democracy. I do not mean just democracy for trade unions, but for all people at work. Their rights should be developed at the same time as the responsibilities of trade unions are being spelt out.

I want to give an example of the balance of rights. If, as I think is right, the Government have set out legislation which states that before any strike is called there should always be a secret ballot, which should usually be a postal ballot, the results of that ballot should be binding on the members. That means a two-way street. If the ballot states that there should be no strike, there should be no strike and trade union leaders should not try to get around that decision. However, if the ballot states that there should be a strike, all members should normally be expected to support the strike. It is not reasonable for the Government to propose to set up legislation allowing people to break half the bargain but not the other half. Many trade unionists would regard an even-handed approach as a fair and reasonable balance and that is reasonable in terms of natural justice.

The alliance view is that, if we are to go further down that road, the involvement of employees in decision-making processes that affect them within their companies should be enhanced. We stress that employers' representatives—I have spoken to them—who call continuously for more and more detailed regulation of trade unions cannot logically argue that there should be no statutory backing for measures that would strengthen employees' rights. It seems reasonable to us that employees' rights should go hand in hand with the responsibilities of trade unions.

The alliance believes that all organisations with more than 1,000 employees should be required by law to set up comprehensive employee participation agreements. We accept that the details could and should vary among organisations, but they must provide for genuine consultation at the top level and for the right of employees to be consulted on strategic decisions. Many of the problems of frustration and disillusionment, particularly those that have occurred recently, would have been averted if that type of consultation had been required. That practice is widely accepted in virtually every other industrial country with which Britain trades.

The trade unions must be tuned up to adapt to changing conditions. They should be helped to do so because conditions are changing fast. The closure of many industrial plants has changed for ever the character of many industrial unions. The hon. Member for Stirling may be surprised to hear that I think that he was on stronger ground on that point. Constructive support for trade unions to adapt to change is a legitimate role for Government.

Changing technology means that in future the old-style large industrial organisations will probably tend to be fewer, that many more of the work force are likely to be in smaller units and that flexibility will be required. We will need different and constantly changing skills. I suggest that the trade unions will therefore find that their traditional method of recruiting members will no longer serve them well. They will have to recognise the need to change.

Already some trade unions are changing their role, perhaps to some extent taking on the mantle of the old friendly societies and offering a wide range of services. But they should go further and start helping people who have lost an industrial job and are perhaps moving into self-employment, and into small business. The trade unions should not leave the creation of indigenous enterprise to other people. They should recognise that they have at least in an advisory capacity a useful role to play.

I shall draw on the example of west central Scotland which, perhaps almost more than anywhere else — although obviously parts of northern England are in a similar position — demonstrates the need for change. There is record unemployment and there have been devastating plant closures, with more feared and even identified. It is clear that a new industrial strategy is required. We need to ensure that Scotland gets a fuller share of new investment, new technology and new jobs. That must happen, and the trade unions should be actively involved in it. They must find ways of helping the people of west central Scotland to find new enterprise and develop new, home-grown enterprises. I suspect that the hon. Member for Stirling does not see that as a role in which trade unions should be involved. I am concerned that trade unions do not see it as a role that they should play. But that is the way in which they shall have to move if they are to play a constructive part in the industrial life of Scotland and of the rest of the United Kingdom in the 21st century.

Far from pursuing another hard-line round of interfering in the detailed workings of the trade unions in isolation, the Government should first allow the present

situation to settle, at least for a little time. That is what the employers—never mind the trade unions—want. Many people are concerned that another round of union bashing by the Tories will create a sour atmosphere. Secondly, when further moves take place—we support some—they should do so hand in hand with measures to improve employee participation, consultation and involvement by right in the decision-making processes which affect them in the workplace. That balanced approach is fairer, more just and more honest than the one that we are likely to get from the Government.

The alliance has accepted that the Government's step-by-step approach has achieved some benefits. We believe, however, that there should be a settling down period, that the future goes hand in hand with the responsibilities and rights of employees, and that the type of sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Stirling will do nothing to reduce strikes, unrest or disputatious confrontation within industry. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman relishes it and always will. That is why I hope that he, too, is a dinosaur in Britain.

9.19 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) has done the House a service by giving us the opportunity to debate trade unions and industrial relations matters on a broad basis and especially by focusing on the question of the attitudes and policies of the alliance parties. I propose to follow my hon. Friend's argument. However, I do not believe it is necessary to go back into the highways and byways of the politics of a decade ago to prove the case against the alliance. On that point, if not on any other, I am in agreement with the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce).

Experience suggests that the attitude of the various parties towards the trade unions and industrial relations depends upon their wider economic policies. On this point there is a basic difference of approach between the Conservatives and the other parties. To be brief, the Conservative party believes in fiscal prudence, public spending restraint, and lower public borrowing. We believe that the road to growth and higher employment lies in a flexible and dynamic corporate sector energised by incentives, lower taxes and higher profits.

That is our philosophy, and although we seek the support of the widest possible range of people, we do not require the political co-operation of the trade unions to make our policies work. We have therefore been free to carry through the most extensive programme of trade union reform undertaken by any Government in our history. That reform has been ably described by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling. It is a reform which has been unwelcome to trade union leaders—but it has been welcomed by trade union members and by the country, and we have more to offer in the same vein.

In contrast, the Labour party and the alliance parties believe that the Government should seek a short cut to higher employment by expanding demand through a rapid increase in public spending and public borrowing. The Opposition parties have different ideas about the extent of demand inflation which they believe to be feasible. But for the purpose of my argument the important fact is that all those parties — in the sense that the SDP and the Liberals are distinct — agree that the expansion of demand that they envisage will carry a serious inflationary risk. Each of the Opposition parties proposes to resort to the classic device of an incomes policy to dampen these inflationary pressures.

It is true that the Opposition parties are approaching the question of an incomes policy in different ways. The Labour party is intellectually aware that such a policy is a necessary complement to its economic strategy. However, because it has been unable to get the agreement of the trades unions to an incomes policy it prefers to draw a veil over the whole subject. Nevertheless, we all know that if the Labour party was to form a Government it would have to seek the understanding of the trade unions with regard to wage restraint. We also know that, in turn, that necessity would dictate the terms of the Labour Government's policy towards trade unions and towards industrial relations—for we have seen all this before, in what used to be called the social contract. The Labour party has promised that it would re-write industrial relations law. There can be no doubt that this would be a repeat of what happened in the 1970s, when policy was effectively dictated from Transport house.

The alliance parties also know that an incomes policy is a necessary element in their overall economic strategy. They have tried to make a virtue of recognising that fact. The difference between themselves and the Labour party is that they are too naive — I was interested that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) used that word to describe himself — too inexperienced in government, or perhaps, like the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) too insouciant of detail, to appreciate that they would have to pay a heavy price for the co-operation of the trade unions in the operation of their incomes policy.

For with the alliance parties, as with the Labour party, their policy for trade unions and industrial relations—in spite of all the hopes and aspirations of the hon. Member for Gordon—would be bound to flow from their central commitment to an incomes policy. One important reason for this is that the incomes strategy which is envisaged by the alliance is unworkable, and its breakdown would drive it into the arms of the trade unions.

To make out my claim, I must examine the alliance's incomes policy, and that I propose to do. The alliance document entitled "The Time Has Come" proposes that its income policy should be based on two elements. The first element is what is described as

"a payroll incentive through reduced employers' national insurance contributions."

The idea is to offer a premium from the Government to companies which settle below a norm for income growth.

But if the incentive were to be substantial enough to make any difference to the behaviour of employers, especially those faced with heavy pressures from the unions — I wonder whether alliance Members have thought this through—it would absorb a large part of that increase in public spending which the alliance parties believe to be feasible. For example, a cut of, say, 25 per cent. in the national insurance contributions of, for example, three quarters of employers — assuming that three quarters of employers are paying below the norm —would cost no less than £2·8 billion out of the total of £5 billion which the alliance believes is available in the way of increased public spending.

On the other hand, if the payroll incentive were not substantial, it would be unlikely to make very much difference to employers' behaviour. After all, national

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insurance contributions amount to no more than 6 to 7 per cent. of wage costs. Inevitably, therefore, the alliance parties would be obliged, if they were in a position of power or influence, to call upon the second element of their incomes strategy, which is their proposed "counter-inflation tax".

Would that tax actually be counter-inflationary? let us consider it. If the tax rate were low enough to allow flexibility, many employers would not be deterred from settling above the norm. Such savings, if any, on the amount that they would have paid without the tax would be likely to be exceeded by the amount of the tax, so the effect would be inflationary. Moreover, all experience of incomes policy suggests that the norm tends to become the minimum. In other words, under a low inflation-tax rate, the effect would be to raise labour costs for the high-paying firms without reducing costs for the low payers. This would, again, fuel inflation rather than restrain it. In these circumstances the alliance parties would be forced to contemplate a high inflation-tax rate.

In theory there must be a tax rate which is high enough to ensure that the wage costs of prospective high-paying employers are lower, if they keep to the norm, than if they exceed it. But what then happens to the vaunted flexibility of the inflation tax? It is supposed to be a flexible way to arrive at an incomes policy. The Government of the alliance parties would, in fact, be left with an incomes policy which would be little different from the policies of their predecessors. It would operate, like all its predecessors, to stifle and distort the inevitable and necessary proceses of adjustment in the labour market. Like all previous incomes policies, the alliance policy would prevent firms from securing rapid productivity growth through high rewards to their employees.

Mr. Bruce: No. That is specifically excluded.

Mr. Jackson: It is not specifically excluded, because of the logic of the policy. The alliance would be driven to make the policy operate on the basis of a high tax rate with limited flexibility, since otherwise people would break through it. So the policy would prevent firms from achieving higher productivity by rewarding their employees above the norm. Firms would be prevented from offering the prospect of future rewards for present sacrifices and they would be penalised for seeking to upgrade the skills of their work forces or to attract more labour.

Mr. Bruce: I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's interesting contribution. However, our proposals allow specifically for productivity-related deals to be exempted from any tax. That ensures that such deals can be accommodated within an incomes policy.

Mr. Jackson: It is charming to hear the hon. Gentleman refer to productivity and profit-sharing exceptions. Indeed all these exceptions are listed in "The Time Has Come". Surely the hon. Gentleman appreciates that we have heard all this every time there has been an incomes policy, and every time there is a trade-off between the flexibility and the effectiveness of the policy. The general economic strategy of the alliance requires an effective counter-inflationary policy. The more loopholes that are put into the incomes policy, the less effective it will be. The consequence, as with all incomes policies, will be that the policy will not be counter-inflationary but the reverse.

Perhaps what is even worse than the consequences of the breakdown of the incomes policy that I have been predicting—I return to the broad theme of trade unions and industrial relations—is that the unworkability of the alliance party's incomes strategy would inevitably drive it to seek political deals with the trade unions in return for their co-operation in wage restraint.

I ask the hon. Member for Gordon, rhetorically, which of the industrial relations reforms of the past decade, for some of which his honourable colleagues voted, he would give up to get such co-operation from trade unions? To be even more speculative and to refer to a subject that is close to the hearts of members of the alliance, and to which the hon. Gentleman referred, what sort of industrial democracy would they propose if they had to negotiate all its details with a trade union movement upon whose political co-operation their economic policy depended?

The fact is that this would turn out to be a nightmare for these innocents abroad—the babes in the wood of British politics—and for the country. Fortunately, of course, like all nightmares, it is only a dream. For just as after the next election there will be no Labour Government, so there will be no alliance Government or even an alliance influence in Government. I hope that my remarks this evening will show why that is an outcome to which we should all look forward.

9.31 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I listened carefully to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) about trade unions and industrial relations. The hon. Gentleman does not understand what trade unions are all about. For one thing, when the House is full, as during Prime Minister's Question Time, and all Cabinet Ministers and junior Ministers are present, about seven millionaires sit on the Government Front Bench. There are also millionaires on the Government Back Benches. What do Conservative Members know about trade unions?

Let us take the matter a stage further. Many Conservative Members have connections with financial institutions in the City. Many Conservative Members are members of the legal profession. What do they know about trade unions? I thought that the hon. Member for Stirling would refer to the closed shop of the legal profession, but he did not do so, and for a purpose. Government Benches are lined with people associated with the legal system. It is the biggest closed shop—never mind trade unions. Not all trade unions have closed shops.

The Paymaster General has a nerve to tell the Opposition and the nation what the Government will do about trade union legislation. He is a member of the biggest closed shop in the country. That is a shocking state of affairs. Trade union officials are elected to represent their members, and that is what they have always done. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members are laughing because they do not know what I am talking about. The elected officers of trade unions represent their members, and the members determine the policy of the unions by the decisions that they take at branch meetings and at annual conferences.

I have been a trade union member since the age of 14. I am 61 now. That is a long time. There are some young

lads on the Conservative Benches who have not lived yet. They do not know what life is all about. They certainly do not know what trade unions are all about.

I went down the pits as a very young man. The week before last I said that I went down the pits as a young lad, but this week I am saying that I went down the pits as a young man. I remember the conditions under which we had to work. It followed the period in the 1930s when a Conservative Government crushed the trade unions and the workers. Between 1979 and today there has been a repeat of that period in the 1930s. This Conservative Government are taking a real swipe at the trade union movement in an attempt to crush it.

When I worked down the pits, production was the first priority, earnings were the second priority, and safety was the third priority. The Secretary of State for Energy talks at that Dispatch Box about the number of people who have been killed down the pits. He pours out figures, compares them with nuclear power stations and says that with nuclear power there would be very few deaths. The reason for the large number of deaths all those years ago was that safety was the third priority. The bosses wanted the highest production that they could get. They did not bother about the expense of serious accidents in the mining industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Haynes: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. Not many moments ago I said that there are far too many youngsters on the Conservative Benches, that they have not lived, that they do not know what life is about and that they certainly do not know what trade unions are about. I add that they do not know what work is about, either.

Mr. Dixon: My hon. Friend is right to point out that Conservative Members know nothing about trade unions or about workers. None of them has seen a pair of overalls, let alone worn a pair. Will my hon. Friend also point out to Conservative Members who keep lecturing the trade unions that when men and women go on strike they receive no pay, so they do not easily go on strike? It is usually their weapon of last resort. They have nothing to live on when they go on strike.

Mr. Haynes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out. That was part of the exercise when this Government and previous Governments took action against trade unions.

The job of the trade unions is to look after their members and to ensure that they get a fair deal, but this Government have shackled trade unions and tied them up in chains. The right hon. Gentleman who usually sits below the Gangway, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), was the Prime Minister of the 1970-74 Administration. I was a local government servant at that time. He chained me, too, with his Housing Finance Act 1972 and told us exactly what we had to do. That is what is happening now. The Government are telling people what they should do. They are taking away people's freedom.

This afternoon the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) asked the Prime Minister to give the people freedom. It is his party that is taking freedom and rights away from people. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Employment will look carefully at the Green Paper and consider making changes to it, bearing in mind what is being said in this debate.

Mr. Dixon: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the proposals in the Green Paper is that, if trade union members take part in a ballot and vote against strike action, but the majority take strike action, the trade union can take no action against those who do not do so? If the Government want to be even-handed, they should also say that when a member takes part in a ballot and the majority are against strike action, anyone who wishes to take strike action should be protected from the employer. That would be even-handed of the Government.

Mr. Haynes: How right my hon. Friend is. Let us look at that situation now that my hon. Friend has raised it. The Government say that every trade union by its legislation, must have a ballot before a strike. What about when a ballot is in favour of a strike? Conservative Members start to squeal, yet the union members have acted in accordance with the trade union legislation that this wicked Government have enacted.

The hon. Member for Stirling said that in years gone by trade unions had secured far too large increases in earnings for their members. He forgot something, and it is still happening today. The bosses can have what they like. The chairman and directors can receive massive increases. There are no shackles on that, and I know why. It is because they contribute to Conservative party funds, and while the funds are coming in they will be left alone.

I have been asked to wind up. I wanted to be brief to allow my hon. Friends an opportunity to make a good contribution because of what is being said on the Conservative Benches. I wanted to say what we aim to do when we get back into office. We shall release the chains on the trade union movement, and at the same time we shall give freedom to its members so that they can enjoy what they are paying for.

9.38 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): May I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on a typically robust speech, in which he echoed the thoughts, hopes and beliefs of millions of working men and women throughout the country. There is no doubt that those who read the report of the debate will read his speech and recognise that he spoke for them, unlike the Conservative Members who have spoken.

At the outset I declare that I am proud to be a sponsored member of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and have been since I was 16 years old. I am proud of the fact that my union is the most democratic institution of any in the United Kingdom and I challenge any Conservative Member to deny that. I also make the point very strongly that the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers did not need any legislation or lectures from Tories about how it should have a democratic organisation; it built it itself. Men and women since the union started at the turn of the century have created that democratic organisation of which we are proud. We do not require and will not accept any lectures about freedom or democracy from the Tory party.

It is significant that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) did not declare any interests. He certainly did not declare any membership of a trade union. I suspect that that was because the hon. Gentleman is not a member of a trade union and never has been. By his speech tonight he showed that he knows nothing about the workings of trade unions, the history of trade unionism or the practice of trade unions.

[Mr. John Evans]

I suggest to the House and the British people that that is hypocrisy on the part of the hon. Gentleman, who boasts in the Register of Members' Interests that he is a public relations consultant to companies such as Pritchard's, which specialises in privatisation, the purpose of which is to ensure that some of the lowest paid workers in the land lose their trade union rights and jobs and get lower wages.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to withdraw that, because if he consults the Register of Interests he will find that the only declaration that I have to make is in respect of my shareholding in my company and the clients, which do not include Pritchard's.

Mr. Evans: If I am mistaken—*[Interruption.]*—and if, as my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) says, the hon. Gentleman has been dismissed by the company, I shall withdraw what I said. However, I was quoting from a book that I read only a few moments ago and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has it put right by the authorities of the House.

Let me make it clear at the outset that a one-and-a-half-hour debate on the Consolidated Fund is not an acceptable basis on which to debate the Green Paper introduced to the House by the Paymaster General a few weeks ago. Labour Members expect a full and proper debate on the issues in the document before the Prime Minister plucks up the courage to tell the country that we are to have a general election.

It is essential that every Member of the House of Commons should be given the opportunity to address himself to the contents of that Green Paper which is an extension of the legislation which the Tories have introduced since 1979 and which was aimed solely at neutralising the trade union movement and disciplining the British work force. No one should lose sight of that fact.

A brief glance at the history of the legislation shows clearly what has happened over the past few years. It is often forgotten that the first step in the Government's legislation was the Social Security Act 1980 which withdrew £15 from the social security of families of people on strike, even if the striker himself received no pay or no strike pay from his trade union. That £15 has subsequently been increased.

Then the Employment Act 1980 attacked the closed shop. The closed shop ballots demanded by that Act created the farce whereby 80 per cent. of those affected by the closed shop had to vote in favour of it or 85 per cent. of those voting had to vote in favour before the closed shop could be put into effect.

If any of those figures were applied to general elections, I suspect that not one hon. Member would get here. I do not think that any of us can claim that 85 per cent. of our electorate have cast their votes. Yet that is the challenge put to the trade unions. It is significant that in almost all the cases where there have been ballots to maintain a closed shop, the vast majority of trade unions have voted in favour.

The Act also restricts the right to picket. It restricted the right of individuals in dispute to attempt to demonstrate their feelings about what had happened in their place of work. It restricted their right to participate in secondary action. We all saw the culmination of that in the appalling dispute at Wapping, when News International erected a series of bogus companies to ensure that an arm's-length relationship developed between the workers' jobs in Fleet street and in Wapping. We had the ridiculous position where workers sacked from their employment could take no action against their employers.

The hon. Member for Stirling is smiling. He thinks that it is a huge joke that the law of the land should deny workers in that position the right to take any action to protest about what had happened to their jobs and their employment rights which were also denied.

The Employment Act 1982 contained further attacks on the closed shop. Trade unions lost their immunities and they can now be taken to court and fined huge sums of money because of the actions of their officials. Trade unions can be fined up to £250,000. That is the price that they have had to pay for Tory democracy.

We also had the abolition of trade-union-only contracts, which almost every decent local authority insisted upon to ensure that fair wages were paid to the work force employed on those contracts. Every hon. Member knows that. That is why they not only did that, but insisted upon privatisation.

Then we had the Trade Union Act 1984, which provided for the election of the voting members of the executive committee of a trade union. Part II insisted upon ballots before industrial action, and part III on ballots on a political fund. The Tory party does not like to be reminded that every union which balloted its members who were affiliated to the Labour party won huge victories in those ballots—anything from 80 per cent. to 60 per cent. They were all conducted properly and in a way of which the trade union had a right to be proud. The icing on the cake was when five trade unions which previously had not had a political fund, because of their fears of what the Tory party was up to, balloted their members and succeeded in getting a political fund. We have also had the Wages Act 1986, and deregulation.

At the back of all this has been massive unemployment, created by the Tory Government as a deliberate economic weapon to tame the British work force. It is now agreed by even the most Right-wing critics that the real figure for unemployment in Great Britain is somewhere around 4·5 million. The Tories have manipulated the figures in a manner of which any decent political party would be ashamed. We do not count unemployment in this country now—we count the unemployment figures. That is the bogus attitude which the Tory party has adopted over the past eight years. The truth is that now no one in the country believes any of the monthly statistics issued by the Tory party in relation to what it claims is unemployment.

Now we have the new proposals in the Green Paper, chapter 2 of which is called "Rights of Trade Union Members". That must be one of the sickest jokes that even this Government have ever attempted to perpetrate on working people. Chapter 2 deals largely with part II of the 1984 Act—ballots prior to industrial action. Again, the situation is that the trade unions have won the overwhelming majority of ballots that have been held in industrial action situations. If they are not to forefeit immunity to actions in tort, they must hold those ballots. Strictly speaking, they do not have to hold those ballots, as I am sure the Minister will confirm. They could take industrial action without the ballot, but if they did so they

would be subject to the usual actions in the High Court which unfortunately so many unions have been involved in over the past three or four years.

The interesting thing about the Act is that the right to take legal action against the trade unions was given to the employer, the supplier and the customer, but not to the trade union member. When we raised this in the Standing Committee on that Bill we never got any satisfactory answer as to why all those other people were given the right to take action against the trade unions, but not the worker. Now it is proposed in the Green Paper that the worker should have the right to take action against his own trade union. Whether there is any demand for that is not explained, because there is no evidence that any employee has ever suggested that he should have that right.

I have one interesting question for the Minister. If the situation is created in which the employee can take action against his trade union, will the employer, the customer and the supplier still have that right? Will we be adding to the problems of the trade unions in this area?

This section also deals with the rather vexed question of the right of trade union members legally to cross picket lines and gives them the right to complain to an industrial tribunal. I am sure that the Minister will agree that, no matter how it is dressed up, this is a flagrant, blatant blacklegs' charter, because a situation will be created in which, no matter what has happened over any ballot on industrial action, if an individual has had an opportunity to vote on industrial action and if the decision has gone against him, he is to be protected by law in his determination to cross a picket line and the trade union will be prevented from taking any disciplinary action against him.

I put it to the Minister that all sorts of organisations, such as the British Medical Association, the professional legal associations, cricket clubs, darts clubs and sports clubs of all kinds have the right to take disciplinary action against members who break their rules. Trade unions alone are to be denied that right. Is it not the case that the purpose is to make trade unions irrelevant? They will be prevented by law from taking any disciplinary action against their members in what, after all, is the most fundamental issue in trade unionism—the right to take action to protect one's job or one's conditions of employment.

Chapter 3 deals with the safeguarding and control of union funds. I do not know why this is in the document, because the suggestion inherent in this section is that somehow there is reason to doubt the honesty of union officials and the way that unions control and run their organisations. Not one shadow of doubt has ever been expressed about the way the British trade union movement conducts its financial affairs. I know of no case where a trade union official at the higher levels in the movement has been convicted in a court of law of swindling his trade union. I cannot say that about the City of London or about some of the things that go on there.

In tonight's issue of *The London Evening Standard*, even the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis speaks about the very large sums of Mafia money that are now washing through the City of London. There is no question of any Mafia money ever washing through the trade union movement. In the way it conducts its financial affairs, the trade union movement is a paragon of virtue which the City of London could well learn to take as an example. The City could take lessons from the trade union movement because members' money is held in sacred trust by trade union officials. Many shareholders and many people cannot say that about the City and some of the crooks who operate there.

Chapter 3 also deals with indemnity.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): My hon. Friend has touched on an important point. There is no evidence whatever that the Conservative party is prepared to take any action against corruption in the City, which is a major problem. The Conservatives are attacking the trade union movement on issues about which they have no right to attack them, and there has certainly been no evidence that they are required to do so.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The trade union movement is to be shackled and restrictions and every sort of Government control is to be imposed. However, the City of London is to have self-regulation even though it is patently obvious to the most naive people in the country that self-regulation is a total failure and will continue to be so. It will remain a failure until such time in the not too distant future that a Labour Government will regulate the affairs of the City of London.

Time is short and the Minister has to reply to the debate. One rather significant piece is tucked in at the end of the Green paper. Paragraph 6.19 speaks about the Department running a campaign to inform people of their rights under various pieces of legislation. Will the Minister give me an assurance that in the context of paragraph 6.19 the Government will not mount a massive campaign using taxpayers' money to try to get a propaganda exercise across to the British people in the run up to a general election?

If the Government are concerned about the abuse of power, why have they not taken steps to protect workers from arbitrary conduct by employers? Why are they making things worse for employees by restricting such things as unfair dismissal rights? The Government have a lot to answer for. I assure the Minister and the Tories that we will make them suffer when the general election is called.

9.58 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The House should be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) for initiating this debate. There are some Members for whom a loss of voice would be viewed by the House with some equanimity. In saying that, I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), but when he reads his speech in the morning he may wish that he had been suffering from laryngitis, because he delivered himself of a number of extraordinary propositions. He said that it was the Government who provoked Mr. Scargill into indulging in the coal strike, and that he was looking forward to Mr. Gorbachev being democratically elected as the leader of the Soviet Communist party.

The hon. Gentleman was also looking forward, if and when the alliance had any input into Government, to introducing a measure whereby, if there was a strike ballot, anybody who was in a minority against a strike would be forced to come out on strike. That is an extraordinary illberal proposition. John Stuart Mill must be turning in his grave.

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

There is still some unfinished business to be done with trade unions. I warmly welcome the recently published Green Paper. The closed shop remains a blot on the statute book which has to be removed if only to remove the embarrassment of members of the alliance in this House, many of whom failed to take the opportunity, when they had it, to prevent such a measure from being passed. When the Liberal party had an opportunity to influence the Labour Government to change their labour relations policy in the fundamentally liberal direction of giving people the right—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Paul Dean): Order. We cannot have so many sedentary interruptions.

Mr. Hamilton: When it had an opportunity to influence the Labour Government to change their labour relations policy in a fundamentally liberal direction by giving people the right to belong or not to belong to a trade union, the Liberal party failed to use the opportunity and the influence that it claimed to have to make that change. We look forward to having the support of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) if and when, as I hope we will, we introduce a measure to remove the last vestiges of the closed shop.

I regret to say that the policy of the alliance, in so far as it can be discerned or distinguished, is "Not tonight, Josephine", that this is never the time to make these worthwhile changes, and only in retrospect does it discover that it has some sympathy with them. I welcome the Minister and I hope that he can tell us that the Government intend to move in a fundamentally liberal direction and will restore to people the freedom which the Liberal party does not seem to want to give them.

Mr. Loyden: When will the Conservative party elect its chairman by ballot?

Mr. Hamilton: We have had to attenuate our remarks because of lengthy contributions by Opposition Members. I content myself with the hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to tell us what the Government intend to do.

10.3 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak very briefly. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said that Conservative members were anti-union and were union bashers. The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) suggested, as did the Opposition Front Bench, that Conservatives had no knowledge or experience of trade unions. The hon. Member for Ashfield ought to know that I, like him, at the age of 14 was a member of a trade union. I have been, as he was, a member of more than one union. I was on the national executive of a trade union. Indeed, I know as much about the workings of trade unions as he does.

Attitudes are important. Attitudes during the second world war, when the hon. Gentleman and I joined the trade unions, were very different, because the shop stewards then were mostly ex-first world war union members who suggested that it was important that we kept things moving, and strikes were out in the industry that I was in. This Government have taken a step-by-step approach which has been good for the trade unions and their members.

10.4 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): Mr. Deputy Speaker. I—

Mr. Dixon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought it was a convention of the House that you took one speaker from the Government side and one from the Opposition side. I have been sitting here all night, as have other hon. Members. Had the Minister not wanted to use the debate because he did not want to put forward an argument, he should have given the opportunity to Back Benchers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is customary when Front Benchers rise for them to be called. I am following that custom.

Mr. Dixon: Why did the Minister not rise immediately after our Front Bench spokesman sat down, instead of letting two of his Back Benchers speak? I have as much right to speak as has the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member is not disputing my judgment. Mr. John Lee.

Mr. Lee: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on his good fortune in being able to raise this issue, as it is particularly relevant to the recent publication of the Government's Green Paper entitled "Trade Unions and their Members". I am particularly sympathetic about his loss of voice. Despite that, he made an effective speech. Our proposals are an important further step along a path which the Government chose in 1979 and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for this chance to talk again about these proposals and the benefits that will follow from their implementation.

Before coming to the actual proposals in the Green Paper it might be worth reminding hon. Members of the position that we have reached so far. I agree with all that my hon. Friends have said about the problems and difficulties that this country faced in its industrial relations in the late 1970s. The Labour party was, after all, swept from power in revulsion against the wholesale spread of secondary action and secondary picketing that gripped the country in the winter of 1978, and unions' bully boy tactics and attempts to hold the public to ransom.

No one with any regard for the needs of our economy would want to see the situation that we then had. Trade unions were placed above the law, with virtual immunity from legal actions to recover the cost of damage they had caused. Trade union officials held immunity for the organisation of all sorts of excessive forms of industrial action — indiscriminate secondary action, political strikes, picketing at other people's places of work and secondary action to enforce the closed shop. Employees were being dismissed, without any compensation, simply because they refused to join a union. Union balloting practices denied members a proper voice in elections of officials, or were travesties of democracy, such as "votes" about strikes taken in mass meetings by a show of hands.

Whatever the Labour party may now be saying in public, I have little doubt that if it gets any sort of chance to act it will simply turn back the clock and we will have, once again, all the old evils and malpractice re-emerging.

Nor can the voter look with any confidence at all the alliance's ideas. The SDP leadership consists of the very same people who were prominent members of a

Government who presided over the winter of discontent and supported the laws which allowed it to happen. They really have learnt nothing from their experience, or—to be more charitable perhaps — have learnt the wrong lessons. How else are the public to regard a proposal to impose some sort of statutory process to establish trade union recognition rights — which can only result in repeated, and more frequent, "Grunwicks" — complete no doubt with Cabinet Ministers joining the picket lines!

When the alliance, or part of it, has not been fighting this Government's proposals tooth and nail, it has been looking round for weird and wonderful ideas—such as systems of "positive rights" — whose importation into British law would simply lead to confusion, misunderstanding and chaos, with consequent damage to our industry and commerce. My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), in his elegant and devasting critique of alliance incomes policy, destroyed its credibility.

Our aim since coming to power in 1979 has been to redress the balance of power between employers and trade unions and to make unions more accountable to their members. There have been major reforms. Trade unions are liable for legal actions for injunctions or damages. Legal immunity has been removed from certain unacceptable forms of industrial action, such as indiscriminate secondary or sympathy action, and picketing away from a picket's own place of work. Secret ballots before strikes and some other forms of industrial action and for the election of voting members of union executives have been provided as have regular reviews of political fund ballots. Increased protection has been given against unfair dismissal for non-union members in a closed shop.

These changes have had significant effects. Strike ballots are becoming an everyday feature, with over 230 since 1984. Some major strikes, for example, in the Civil Service, the NUR, and the Post Office, have been averted because the law has been used to ensure that members were given the right to be properly consulted. Employers have shown themselves ready to used to ensure that members were given the right to be properly consulted. Employers have shown themselves ready to use the remedies available by taking legal action in over 100 cases. Some progress has been made in the protection of union members against their unions and the climate that we have created has meant that members are more willing to take advantage of the safeguards that the law provides. We have also made it possible for members to have a better say in the way that their unions are run. About 30 major unions have changed, or have said they will change, their election provisions to comply with our legislation.

There have also been independent initiatives which will improve industrial relations. The increasing incidence of new forms of agreement between employers and trade unions are designed to reduce the likelihood of industrial action. There is greater emphasis on flexibility of working arrangements, and increasing emphasis has been placed on employee involvement.

These developments are creating a new climate. It can be no coincidence as my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling said, that in 1986 the number of days lost due to strikes was the lowest for over 20 years. But more needs to be done. As I have said, the Green Paper "Trade Unions and Their Members" represents an important further step in the programme that we began in 1979. It might be best if I confirm, if only for the avoidance of doubt, that the Green Paper and the proposals that it contains do not single out for special treatment any particular sector of the economy. The proposals are intended to cover unions and their members whether they be in the public or private sector.

The impact of legislation based on the proposals will not depend, therefore, on where unions operate, or their members work, but rather on the degree to which the union itself has modernised its procedures to ensure, for example, the regular, secure election of its leadership. Unions which treat their members and potential members fairly and in a democratic way will have nothing to fear from our poposals. Indeed the reverse will be true. However, the old style unions have, at best, dragged their feet over implementing the changes introduced by our earlier legislation and, at worst, have blatantly ignored them. It is unions such at those, the dinosaurs of the union movement, that need to think again. Labour Members have shown open antagonism to, and outright rejection of, the Government's proposals. That leads me and, I have no doubt, the public at large to conclude that what matters to the Labour party is the protection of union power rather than union democracy.

The proposals are based on experience since 1979 and will work in practice. Consultation is, however, an important part of our process of law reform and 10 weeks have been allowed for people to obtain the Green Paper, to read it, to consult others as they think best, and then to send comments to the Government, which must be received by 5 May. Special efforts have been made to offer small firms, as well as the TUC and the CBI, the opportunity to comment on the Green Paper proposals.

No one can legislate for good industrial relations, but good laws can help set a climate and framework within which good industrial relations can develop and flourish. Our efforts to date, and the Green Paper proposals, are in no sense an attack on trade unions as such. Responsible trade unions, willing and able to take account of their members' wishes, can be strong—perhaps the strongest —trade unions. I believe that the more we give the ordinary trade union member a say in his or her union's policy-making and actions the more loudly will the voice of moderation and good sense be heard.

Beef Industry

10.11 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I welcome this opportunity to initiate a debate on the sector of the farming industry that is, at this time, under the greatest pressure. I very much regret, however, that the Government have seen fit to depart from the long-standing practice of enabling the House to debate, in its own time, the proposals of the European Commission for the annual price settlements before they embark upon the negotiations. I have checked the records and, so far as I can discover, 1979 was the only time that a Government have not provided such an opportunity. On that occasion it was due to the fact that the then Labour Government were on their last legs. It may be that the present Administration are similarly on their last legs and I have no doubt that that is increasingly the wish of the farming community.

This debate focuses on the position of the beef sector because of the crisis that the Government's action and inaction has induced. I was moved to tell the House at Question Time last week that the Minister's reply on the subject of beef to my question and those of other hon. Members, Conservative Members as well as Opposition Members, was complacent. As a consequence, I said that I would seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment. Therefore, I am doubly glad that it has proved possible to have this debate so soon after the Minister's rather astonishing utterances.

The Minister has demonstrated a smug indifference to the predicament of the beef industry since he came back to report on the December package in the House on 17 December. In the statement about the deliberations, he said:

"Taken with the other measures, the beef producer must accept that this is a much more satisfactory agreement than anyone would have thought possible."—[*Official Report*, 17 December 1986; Vol 107, c. 1218.]

He also said that he was sorry that people—I assume he meant farmers—took an excessively gloomy view when it was such an extremely good deal.

In the weeks that have elapsed, the National Farmers Union of England and Wales, and that of Scotland and all those who are associated with the industry have agreed that their initial judgment about the impact of the package on the industry was right and that something pretty close to a disaster stares the beef industry in the face.

Around the country and, to some extent, in this House, the Minister has tried to suggest that he did a good job for Britain in comparison with what was done for other member states. However, that must be set against the level of farming incomes in this country, compared with those in other European countries. The figures provided by the EEC Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations show that the purchasing power of the net income per farmer in this country between 1984 and 1986 was, on average, 40 per cent. below the average for the years 1973 to 1975. That is a bigger fall than has been experienced in all other European countries, where the average decline has been about 25 per cent.

Real farming incomes in this country during this Government's period of office, since 1978-79, have suffered a larger fall than those in any of the then 10 member states. That fall has been just over twice that experienced by nine member states, and two and half times the average for the other eight. Those figures show that the Government have presided over a progressively worsening situation for farmers and one which is worse in this country than in any other member state.

The Minister should not brag about his success, or rather failure, in Brussels relative to what was achieved by other countries, especially about beef. He should not quote again the misleading figures that he has sought to give the country, which make comparisons with the settlement in the Federal Republic of Germany, where carcase weights are about 20 per cent. heavier and support levels are about 20 per cent. higher than in this country because of their positive monetary compensatory amounts. The position is broadly comparable to that which has been achieved in this country. The position in Ireland and in France was substantially better.

It is important to consider beef in the context of agriculture as a whole and in the context of the incomes of those who are peculiarly dependent on beef, and to consider the ways in which their incomes have changed during the past few years. Page 38 of the Government's annual review shows that the index of average net income per farm in the United Kingdom for lowland cattle and sheep, which is greatly influenced by the beef market, now stands at one quarter of its level in the Government's base year of 1982. The slightly more advantaged farmers who are less heavily dependent on beef and for whom sheep play a larger part — that is to say, those in the less favoured areas who make returns based on their cattle and sheep—have seen their incomes drop by a quarter since 1982.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): My hon. Friend will be aware that I represent an area where beef is important. Is he aware that within the past month I have been advised of two substantial farmers who have pulled out of beef altogether because they are losing too much money and that they have said to me, "If we are in difficulties, small farmers who depend more heavily on beef are facing a catastrophe."? Does he agree that that is the reality that is creeping over the beef industry in Scotland?

Mr. Maclennan: Scotland is peculiarly hard hit, as beef output constitutes 25 per cent. of total agricultural output, which is a high proportion. Relatively speaking, the Scots are certainly suffering greatly, but the position is bad in Wales, the south-west, Yorkshire and all beef-producing areas. There is no part which does not face a stark decline in income where beef has been a traditional product.

The Minister's sponsorship is hard to understand, in view of the evident shortfall in incomes and the shortfall between the total return and the target price for beef, particularly since the December package became operative —in other words, in the first three months of this year. The shortfall between the total return and the target price has ranged from 11·43p per kg in the week ending 11 January to the most recent shortfall of 16·31p per kg. Over the whole marketing year, that amounts to an appalling shortfall on the target price. At present, it stands at about £73·7 million.

It is evident from the Government's figures that the position is acute. Even the most partisan Minister in the Government—the former chairman of the Conservative party — cannot shrug it off. Indeed, perhaps his partisanship is surpassed only by his successor in that

office. Even he cannot be indifferent. I hope that tonight the Minister will take the opportunity to tell the industry what he intends to do about it.

A few further facts are necessary to bring home the plight. Despite the 5·1 per cent. increase in support prices which took effect on 5 January, market prices today are lower than they were a year ago, at 93·5p per kg. That is the lowest average monthly price since 1981. The industry is most deeply alarmed about its prospects after 6 April when the December package becomes fully operational with reductions in intervention.

It is necessary to consider closely what the 16 December agreement brought about. The Government sought to congratulate themselves then and now on what they achieved. But in reality, the basic level of support from intervention which, admittedly, in this period has not been providing an effective bottom to the market will be further reduced by up to about 13 per cent. from 6 April.

It is difficult to calculate the full effect of that on the market. To some extent, that depends upon the triggering mechanisms of the Commission's management arrangements. I hope that the Minister will pay attention to this point because I believe that a great deal depends upon the signs that he gives of how he expects to see the market managed and whether he is prepared to use any of the resources that he boasted on 17 December were available for export refunds and private storage aids. We heard a lot about that at the time and about the more than 400 million ecu that were to be made available to smooth out the market as and when additional culling of dairy cows came about. The Minister has some explaining to do. Is that money genuinely available? If so, when does he propose to have it spent to stop what appears to be a spiralling decline in the market?

Another effect of the December package was the quite extraordinary preference extended to Irish beef imports which, as a result of the arrangements for introducing a special beef premium at 12 per cent. and the retention of the right of the Irish exporters to enjoy our variable beef premium, has meant a considerable enhancement of their unfair discriminatory advantage in our markets.

Because of the additional cow culling that has come about as a result of the additional dairy quota cuts, in the months of January and February there have been about 27 per cent. more cows on the market when compared with last year's figures. Of itself that would be enough to explain the disruptions in the market which are already prevailing even in advance of what happens in April. The introduction of the new beef premium throughout the other member countries of the Community, but not in this country, will have a further adverse effect on our international trade. Whereas our producers have to pay the clawback on their exports, those who receive the premium in Europe are not similarly penalised.

The variable premium scheme was extended for two years—that was welcomed at the time—but it must be acknowledged that that has made precious little impact on the actual incomes and returns of producers. The stark reality is that the shortfall that I have described exists notwithstanding the continuation of the premium scheme. It must be clear now to the Minister that reliance on the variable premium alone, without suitable intervention arrangements, at this time cannot be sufficient to sustain a healthy beef sector.

In December the Minister boasted of the 6 per cent. green pound devaluation. His self-esteem was not entirely merited. That devaluation was introduced to rectify the distortions that had flowed from the much earlier devaluation of the green punt by the Irish that should have been rectified by the Government earlier. Despite the recent depreciation of the pound, the green pound gap for beef is still running at more than 17 per cent.

The combined effect of all those measures agreed with such acclaim by the Minister in December is the prospect of a reduction of £50 to £60 per head in the value of beef cattle following the April implementation of the intervention arrangements. That means a loss for virtually everyone engaged in that business.

It was a thoroughly bad package. It took some measures to protect the dairy industry, but at the expense of the beef industry. The Minister must rectify that soon. He is going to Brussels next week, and the opportunity to obtain a more satisfactory agreement is available to him. There are measures which he can take at his own hand, and there are matters that he must clear up tonight. There are ambiguities about the Government's intentions. Above all, he must show that the Government appreciate the industry's condition. So far, he has shown no sign of that.

What necessary steps must be taken? First, there is the possibility of paying the suckler cow premium at the increased upper permissible limit. I believe that that money can and should be paid without delay. All headage payments need to be raised to the full extent of the present limits, but, when the Minister goes to Brussels next week, he must seek a further increase in those limits. Secondly, the Minister must immediately take special measures to remove from the market the culled cows which are causing the distortion to which I referred. The time has come to find the 400 million ecu for private storage and assistance to the export market.

The overriding priority, as perceived by not only the producers but the representatives and spokesmen of the meat trade, is a major devaluation of the green pound. This would have a threefold beneficial effect. First, it would increase the support prices. Secondly, it would reduce the negative MCAs which are making exporting of our products so difficult at this time. Thirdly, it would increase the ceilings on headage payments on beef cows.

The Government have been oblique about their attitude to the green pound. It is true that the Parliamentary Secretary, in an extremely interesting aside in a speech he made on 12 March in Exeter, said that it was the Minister's intention to seek a green pound devaluation of three or four time the 4 per cent. proposed by the Commission. If the Minister succeeds in obtaining three to four times that proposed, he will have staved off the worst of the crisis. But there has been no confirmation of that intention from the Minister, and the Minister of State has tried to make a virtue of secrecy about the Government's intentions. I put it to the Minister that, if confidence is to be restored in the industry, the industry must know that the government intend to seek a substantial devaluation of the green pound. This is just as much a matter of managing the market as any of the matters to which I have referred.

It would be unforgiveable if the Government simply refused to show their support for the industry through this proposed devaluation, lest they fail to achieve the full amount that perhaps they and we would consider necessary. If the Minister achieves the devaluation which I have suggested is appropriate and which his junior Minister has said is the target, he will get nothing but plaudits from both sides of the House. We all recognise

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what a serious predicament this is. It is not one on which cheap partisan points ought to be made. The rural economy is at stake. The Minister has deprived himself, by the refusal to hold a debate on this matter, of the normal opportunity which Members of Paliament have had to offer their views about what is needed. Unlike the past, the Minister cannot go to Brussels with the support of a united House of Commons, because he has deprived himself of that opportunity.

In addition to the substantial devaluation of the green pound, further action is needed in respect of intervention coverage to halt the downward trend in market prices. Representatives of the trade and producers have suggested that the R4H category should be included in the group to which intervention applies. We look forward to hearing the Minister's views on that proposal.

We also advocate the recalculation of the basis on which beef MCAs are determined in line with reduced support levels that will flow from the December decision. The Minister could give the commitment to action necessary to remove from the market the additional cows from the dairy herd. It is time that the Minister faced the inequity in the arrangements on clawback and recognised that it is unfair and unreasonable to extract this clawback from our exporters while the Irish have the advantage of obtaining the variable premium. An abatement of that clawback to make it at least equal to the new beef premium is another step that the Minister should take in agreement with his colleagues in Brussels.

The Scottish National Farmers Union has made an urgent call—I believe no less dramatic than the vote of censure against the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at the annual general meeting of the union—to avert the collapse of hundreds of businesses in the rural economy. It is alarmed by the evident collapse of the real returns of specialist beef producers. Last year in Scotland, those returns fell by a further 10 per cent.

We are facing a crisis, and the Minister will enjoy the support of the House if he stands up for the interests of our producers and our industry. We eagerly look forward tonight for some evidence that that is the Minister's intention.

10.37 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) because, for once, we find ourselves on the same wavelength. We both represent constituencies with substantial hill cow numbers in less favoured areas. We face much the same problems. I shall pick up some of the points that the hon. Gentleman made, and certainly the main burden of my remarks will be towards the same end—to help the beef producers in this country to obtain better prospects for the future than look likely at present.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland finished his speech by talking about the National Farmers Union of Scotland. I wish to begin my remarks by saying that I have been greatly impressed by the work of the president of the Scottish NFU, Mr. Ian Grant. I appreciate the difficulties south of the border, but he has given a constructive lead to the farmers in Scotland. He has pointed out the important issues that the Government should consider and has given the Government support when they have responded. He has commented on past developments and has expressed his expectations for the future.

We all accept that 1985 was a devastating year for Scottish farmers because of the miserable weather. Scottish farmers are still paying a heavy price for that year, despite the bad weather payments that the Government were able to introduce. However, those payments represented emergency support rather than the offer of long-term stability, which is so important. It is not surprising that incomes dropped by about 70 per cent. Fortunately, incomes rose substantially last year, but farmers' incomes are still far below those for 1983 and 1984.

The debate is about beef, but I think that it should cover livestock rearing generally. For example, the sheepmeat regime is as important to those who engage in sheep farming in Scotland, England and Wales as beef prices are to those who farm in beef. I suspect that most beef farmers have ewes, and they appreciate what the Government have done through the sheep premium and sheepmeat regime. They are probably engaged in the most profitable sector of livestock at present. Farmers in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Galloway (Mr. Lang) for example, appreciate and welcome what the Government were able to offer in compensation following the Chernobyl disaster. I understand, of course, the seriousness of the position in Wales.

The Government are right to fight support for beef against the background of price fixing in Europe. There has been a marked improvement in the hill livestock compensatory amount and in the suckler cow subsidy, which have been most important support grants for the industry. It is right, however, that the Government should consider moving to the maximum grant for the suckler cow and do all that they can to help with the compensatory amount. That will do something to retain that fast-disappearing beast, the suckler cow, which is bread and butter to Scottish beef producers. If the end price is not right, the suckler cow, including the multiple sucklers, will go.

When talking about end price, I hope that the Government will carry out an effective review of the Meat and Livestock Commission to ascertain whether it is carrying out its grading work adequately and whether its marketing operations are as successful as they should be. There must be a much more enlightened approach by the MLC to helping the beef industry throughout the United Kingdom.

All these issues relate directly to the green pound, and it is imperative for beef producers, rearers and finishers that it is devalued by about 16 per cent. That moment cannot come too soon. I have written personally to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to highlight the need for this to happen and to ask her to join the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in taking that course. I realise that it will cost money, but beef production is a long-term industry. If we kill off cows, it will take years to build up the beef herd, particularly if it is to match the quality of the present herd.

There is no other issue in farming that is so clear-cut. If the green pound is not devalued, beef will go bust, as it were. I have been impressed by what my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute, (Mr. MacKay), the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, has been doing for Scottish

farmers and by the way in which he spoke to the annual general meeting of the National Farmers Union this month. I give my full support to him and to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in their determination to try to obtain the maximum devaluation of the green pound that they can. I appreciate that they have their troubles, but I wish them every success in rifling what they can from the Treasury.

I hope that both my hon. Friend and right hon. Friend understand that farmers are infuriated over the unfairness that results from the system in Eire. It is incomprehensible to farmers. After all, we can only go some way towards explaining why farmers in Eire, and indeed in Northern Ireland, can land their beasts on the mainland of this country and obtain a better income from the operation. It is intervention gone mad. I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend will explain how the Irish can get away with it. It is important to find a way to stop it.

I cannot accept that the United Kingdom should suffer on account of Ireland's practices. We cannot go on looking into the future for ever, as though decisions may be made next month or next year in the European Community. We must determine just where we stand at present and where we should head in the next couple of years, so that we have confidence to go ahead with beef production. My right hon. Friend and his colleagues are doing their best to get constructive decisions made in Europe. I appreciate the difficulty of having to get some unanimity among the 10 nations, but, during a period of price fixing, we must come up with some firm decisions, not only on the green pound, but on other matters that presently affect farming.

I read with great interest the speech made by the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland in Inverness on 12 March. He set out the union's farming manifesto. It is interesting to compare it with what we have achieved and are achieving. The first point was:

"Removal of the green pound distortion to permit fair competition amongst EEC farmers."

That is what I and other hon. Members ask for, and that is what Ministers are trying to achieve during the present discussions.

The second point was:

"Defence of our beef industry to enable the continuance of Scottish quality beef production, beyond the problems of the next two years."

That is what other hon. Members and I ask for. We want long-term decisions to be made in the industry.

The third point was:

"Adequate funds to permit the uptake of woodlands as an alternative form of land use, and to finance other practical ideas of diversification."

That highlights the new policy that my right hon. Friend announced earlier this month about alternative land use. Again, it relates to forestry, particularly broadleaf forestry, and other ideas relative to a slightly more flexible approach to planning and developing the rural economy. Again, the president of the NFU and I are at one on this issue.

The fourth point was:

"Commitment to an attractive voluntary set-aside proposal for cereals."

That matter has a high priority for the Government at present. Perhaps we shall decide on a sum of, say, £75 an acre, as opposed to planting ground with cereals. That is an interesting possibility.

The fifth point was:

"Immediate research into alternative uses for crops."

Of course, that is being done.

The sixth point was:

"Encouragement for alternative crops."

Again, that is a high priority for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The seventh point was:

"Reduction in interest rates to reduce the debt burden."

That is one of the many successes of the Budget, including the two 0·5 per cent. changes in interest rates, and perhaps something more in view of the Chancellor's prudent economic policies. A 1 per cent. increase in interest rates probably means more to the average farmer than, perhaps, additonal allowances for suckler cows or hill cows. Unfortunately, many farmers have high overdrafts to finance, and interest rates are of prime importance.

The manifesto went on to state:

"Extension of the ADP principle."

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland are keen to do just that. With the farming manifesto very much in mind, we should try to resolve the important green pound issue. By doing so, we shall move an important step towards uniting the agriculture industry.

The new policies on alternative land use, forestry, workshops, flexible planning and particularly conservation that have been announced this month are very important. During the last five years there has been a remarkable transformation. Farmers now think in terms of conservation. Environmentally sensitive areas and management agreements are now accepted by the thoughtful farmer. He knows that they will help him to maintain his income. I agree with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland that the key issue is the devaluation of the green pound by 16 per cent. If my right hon. Friend the Minister of State can achieve such a devaluation, it will be of great value to agriculture, and particularly to beef producers, in the United Kingdom.

10.50 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I welcome the fact that this debate is being held this evening. There is an immense crisis in the United Kingdom beef industry. I sincerely hope that in his reply the Minister of State will take seriously what has been said. The livelihood of many farmers, particularly in the upland and fattening areas, is being affected.

A number of things are radically wrong with the beef industry. The lack of profitability, above all in the hill beef enterprise, is causing major problems. That is not particularly new, but during the last 12 months it has reached crisis proportions. During the last 10 years the beef suckler herd in England and Wales has declined by 25 per cent.—from 1·7 million to 1·3 million cows. The local NFU branch in my constituency estimates that in the last nine months the proportion of suckler cows has declined by 5 per cent. The number of suckled calves sold in my constituency has also declined. The annual total of 7,000 animals marketed in the autumn sales dropped by 1,500 this year. That is a significant decline. We are mortgaging our beef industry for short-term objectives. We have to overcome that problem.

The green pound problem has already been mentioned. As for the upland areas, we have not been promised an increase in the hill land compensatory allowance for beef suckler cows in the coming year. This is very serious. Recent reports on the profitability of the finishing of cattle make depressing reading. The Meat and Livestock Commission calculated recently that the profitability of the 18-month beef finishing system is now so poor that it is advising farmers not to indulge in it, even though it was previously one of the most profitable beef systems in the country. Its profitability has now reached a 10-year low.

The position on the continent is very different. Prices for beef cattle are approximately one third higher per head than they are in this country. This is due mainly to the distortion that is created by the green pound. It proves that for beef it is not a Common Market. Working on prices at the beginning of February, a 450 kg beast in this country would fetch £450, including the variable premium. A similar size of animal in France, at continental prices, would make £622, and in West Germany £633.

I heard the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at the annual general meeting of the NFU, say that as a result of the December agreement British producers would fare better than their continental neighbours in that they would experience less of a reduction as a result of the reduction in intervention prices that come into operation in April. Continental producers — particularly France and West Germany, which are two of the major producers — have a more profitable system of beef production anyway, so they can sustain slightly increased reductions in the intervention price of their product.

I do not regard the December agreement as a great success. It was a victory for the Treasury, but it was not a victory for British beef producers. The 13 per cent. reduction in intervention price will reduce the price by at least £50 per head, and that, unfortunately, has already been anticipated by buyers of store cattle, who have already discounted that £50 before the reduction in intervention price comes into being. The result is that upland producers who are selling store cattle have suffered in anticipation of that happening.

The green pound reduction of 6 per cent. in December was totally inadequate in relation particularly to what happened to the imports of Irish beef before December, and we have already heard that there is still a 17 per cent. figure line with regard to monetary compensatory amounts. This discriminates against United Kingdom beef producers and it is producing unfair competition.

Tied in with that in the December agreement is the disposal of dairy cull cows as a result particularly of the 8·5 per cent. quota cutback commencing in April. Estimates have been made that 600,000 tonnes of beef will come on to the European market in the next two years. The EEC Commission disputes that figure. I should like to hear from the Minister what his estimate is of surplus beef coming on to the market. Is it 600,000 tonnes, as was forecast in December, or is it 250,000 tonnes of additional beef from the dairy sector, about which the EEC Commission is now talking? As I understand it from figures calculated in this country, there may be an additional 75,000 tonnes of dairy cull beef coming on to the market.

That surplus will depress the price of quality beef and is already forcing people to sell up their beef enterprises. The net result of this is that in two years' time—after this surplus dairy cull beef has gone through the system quality beef producers will have been forced out of production—we will then not have enough beef in this country to supply our own market, and that could put a strain on our balance of payments.

The Minister should take that point extremely seriously. We must, looking at our objectives in the beef industry over the next two years, hold the line. First, our upland beef herd must not decline any further while this surplus dairy beef is on the market. We must hold on now while this temporary surplus is occurring. Secondly, we must hold our beef prices at levels at which farmers can at least make a profit—which certainly is not the case at the moment—or we are likely to see a shortage in two years' time.

In the long-term we must maintain our suckler cow population, particularly in the hills, as that is an enterprise that complements the sheep industry, which is friendly to the environment and utilises some of the resources of the upland areas. The problem is that there is so much capital invested in beef cows, and with the high interest rates that have been obtaining in recent years it is extremely difficult to get a worthwhile return on the capital investment in a beef enterprise.

The solutions to the problems that we have at the present time are as follows. First, we must increase the beef cow premium by a further £6 per cow, which is allowed under the European Community rules as a result of the agreement negotiated in December. If the Government do not do that, they can rightly be accused of dragging their feet and it can be said that the Treasury, rather than the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is controlling policy. Secondly, we must see an increase in hill land compensatory allowances to keep hill cows in the less favoured areas for the next two years. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said, this should be increased to the maximum possible amount.

Thirdly, at the earliest possible opportunity we must join the European monetary system, because this will undoubtedly benefit interest rates. It has been calculated that if we were to join the European monetary system there

would be a 2 per cent. reduction in interest rates and that this would save the farming industry £240 million. That is a significant sum. Fourthly, as soon as possible we must devalue the green pound by the outstanding 17 per cent., about which there has already been comment. A failure to devalue will penalise British beef producers and place them at a further disadvantage in relation to continental producers.

The ability of the Government to see through a major devaluation of the green pound is a test of their sincerity to British livestock producers, and especially to beef producers. If they do not do that, they could stand accused of keeping down the retail price index prior to a general election and of holding farmers to ransom. I am sure that that is not the case, but I should like the Minister's assurance on it.

Finally, I should like to draw the Minister's attention to a statement this week in *Agra Europe* which challenges the amount of cash promised for the industry in the December agreement. I shall quote shortly from *Agra Europe*. It says:

"Concern is growing in the UK that elements supposed to have been included in the December beef and dairy package are now not going to the implemented. England and Wales National Farmers Union President Simon Gourlay drew attention in particular at this month's NFU Council meeting to the 435 million ECU said by UK Minister of Agriculture Michael Jopling to have been earmarked for the disposal of the beef that would result from additional dairy cow cullings. Gourlay said that this sum was not and never had been set aside, and he quoted Agriculture Commissioner Frans Andriessen as saying that the sum had been talked about but that there was no provision for it in the 1987 budget".

I should like an assurance from the Minister that the sum of 435 million ecu is in the budget. Is the England and Wales president of the NFU accurate in saying that that money has not been provided for at all in the 1987 budget? If the Minister does not act rapidly in the price negotiations next week, much of the beef industry will collapse. The industry is being pushed back on its heels. Some abattoirs have recently been forced to close and we must keep our meat industry alive. I plead with the Minister to act, in view of the state of the British beef industry.

11.3 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Like all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I have a constituency interest in the beef industry. All hon. Members who have taken part in the debate have expressed a strong feeling for, and genuine concern about, the future of this important industry. The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) quoted from the speech by Ian Grant, the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland at its annual general meeting in Inverness on 12 March. The hon. Gentleman omitted to quote the interesting passage in which Mr. Grant described the Government's present position as

"A botched up incoherent and chaotic set of policy decisions on the Commission's December package proposals."

There are strong feelings in many unlikely areas. The Government ought to respond to the clear and legitimate concern felt by many about the future of this important industry. I welcome the opportunity to consider the serious problems that face the beef industry. I urge the Minister to take steps to protect this important and strategic industry now in its time of need. Many marginal agricultural areas in the north and west and in the uplands are heavily dependent upon the beef sector. Beef accounts for 25 per cent. of Scottish agricultural output. In many cases that beef is produced on land that is suited only to grazing enterprises, in areas that are most vulnerable to economic change.

The Government have a duty to protect that sector of industry in such areas. Long-term policies have to be deployed in an industry of this nature, where it takes years to build up a breeding herd. While it is easy for farmers in an immediate financial crisis to cull some of their breeding cows, it can take a very long time for the industry to replace that capacity. The beef herd has declined every year since the Government came to power. Since 1985 the specialist beef herd in Scotland has declined by one fifth, and production fell by a further 10 per cent. last year, and no wonder, because the real returns for beef production are now, on average, £14 a head less than they were in 1985.

The background to this issue is not very encouraging. The December package—of which the Minister of State has been so proud in his recent statements — could actually cut the basic level of market support by up to 13 per cent. from 6 April. That is disturbing, because many of our beef farmers are already heavily in debt and there is no sign of an immediate let up for them.

I acknowledge that the Minister has succeeded in retaining the beef variable premium. Sadly, farmers in other parts of Europe are about to get a new rearing premium that will further distort the competitive position of our producers. The position of the British beef sector will be further eroded unless urgent action is taken. Indeed, the National Farmers Union of Scotland has expressed the fear that £50 or even £60 a head could come off the value of beef cattle in the coming months. That is a disturbing set of circumstances.

The preferential position of Irish producers in our market is likely to be enhanced by certain aspects of the Minister's December package. We know that there has been a flood of Irish imports for some months, in addition to the beef that is coming on to the market as a result of dairy cows being taken out of production and culled as a result of cuts and milk quotas. These circumstances are playing havoc with British beef producers.

The Minister said that he was excited about having obtained this package agreement in December, but, sadly, he failed to tie up some very important loose ends that should have been included. On 17 December he said:

"The package helps very considerably. First, there is more than 400 million ecu put aside to get further exports of beef as the cows come on to the market. That will reduce the number of cows in the market." — [*Official Report*, 17 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. 1217.]

This point was raised by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), who quoted the interesting comments from *Agra Europe*, which were published last week, suggesting that that 435 million ecu, which the Minister held up as being available to soften the blow and to protect the beef industry from the knock-on effect of all those dairy cows being culled, may have been a figment of his imagination. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor quoted what the president of the National Farmers Union, Simon Gourlay, had to say about that one.

Agra Europe went on to say:

"Other items of cash for additional export support that were promised in the package also seem to be in doubt . . . misinformation . . . followed publication of the December

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package pointing out that it was deceitful to say that the 435 ecu was there when it wasn't . . . What is becoming clear is that the negotiations of the December package were so complex and so lengthy that there is a marked lack of clarity over what was actually agreed and what were merely items for discussion."

The Minister would do us and the beef industry a favour if he would take the opportunity of this debate to say whether those funds are available to deal with this difficult position. He has a bit of explaining to do.

At the moment, the Minister has on his hands a genuine crisis in the beef sector. This crisis in the market for beef could spell ruin for some producers. The Minister was rash enough to promise specific action to alleviate that situation, and he seems to have been found wanting on this occasion. I hope that when he winds up this debate he will resolve the doubt that has been raised on many people's minds.

I hope that the Minister will accept that the Government have a duty to protect the competitive position of this extremely important sector of British agriculture. The Government should deploy all the mechanisms that they have at their disposal to support the industry in these circumstances. The Minister should use national aids or other measures that may be permitted under European Community agreements, including the suckler cow premium, headage payments, hill livestock compensatory allowances and any other mechanisms that are available to deal with this crisis.

The green pound has already been referred to. I recognise that the present problem may have more to do with the vagaries of the Irish green punt than with the valuation of the United Kingdom green pound, but British agriculture and rural Britain are entitled to expect the Government to take all appropriate action to protect them from any unfair discrimination. That appears now to require a further significant devaluation of the green pound.

On the long-term prospects for the beef industry, I am convinced that the beef and sheep sectors deserve a secure future. Lean beef and lean lamb are healthy foods, produced by an extensive farming system that has an excellent record on animal welfare. If the quality of the product and the price to the consumer are right, there could be scope for a significant increase in the consumption of these products in the future, and that in turn could lead to an increase in the area of grazing land on farms in Britain, to the promotion of a return to mixed farming and to a reduction of cereal surpluses. We must not get carried away. We already have significant, substantial and costly surpluses in intervention stocks.

We wish the Meat and Livestock Commission well in its efforts to improve the presentation and marketing of red meat, and the industry must co-operate in producing quality cattle for those purposes. The MLC should get all possible assistance from the Government in promoting the market for beef. Above all, to achieve that objective, we must get the price of beef right. The beef variable premium is part of the answer, but not the whole one. Our objective in Government, as the Minister well knows because I think that he has had an opportunity to study the Labour party's Green Paper on the future of the agriculture industry, will be to seek to repatriate national aspects of the common agricultural policy, and that must include measures to help our own people enjoy more red meat, which would be good for consumers and for the beef industry. We must press the Government to keep their promises to help the beef sector through the current crisis. That is vital if we are to retain an adequate scale of breeding herd in order to provide for, one hopes, expanding markets for beef in the future.

11.15 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I, like other hon. Members, wish to welcome the debate and the opportunity to discuss this most important sector. I hope that those who have spoken will allow me to say that, like them, I believe that the beef producer, especially the specialist beef producer, is a most important person within the agricultural community. The product that he produces plays a vital part in the economy of some parts of the country which would not find it possible to find alternatives. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) rightly pointed to the serious situation which would arise in those areas if beef production ceased to be profitable. I accept that. Beef is a product of regions that do not have a wide range of alternative possibilities.

I hope that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) will acquit me of complacency. I do not believe that I have ever been complacent about the problems of the beef industry. I think that he must follow the argument through from point to point and decide then whether his strictures were justified. The first thing I say to him is that I am determined to do all that I can to ensure that we have a sensible policy to encourage the production of beef, particularly the specialist herd. I want to try to prove to him that that has been the policy of the Government and then to suggest some of the things that we have to do. Perhaps then, if he will let me, I could suggest why I feel that his particular strictures have been far from correct.

I shall first deal with the discussions in Brussels in December. It is not proper to discuss the problems of the beef industry without admitting and mentioning the enormous difficulty that the present system, or at least the pre-December system, placed upon the European Community. The hon. Gentleman is a supporter of the European Community and our membership of it and I know that he would not wish to miss that point. The fact is that the Community beef regime last year was well over budget at some 3·5 billion ecu or £2·25 billion. It has become increasingly expensive to try to deal with the CAP's beef intervention policy. For example, the 200,000 tonnes of Community intervention beef sold to Brazil last year cost FEOGA about £500 million. That is not a sensible policy.

I have to say to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland that it does not give us any confidence in his strictures if he comes to the House and discusses this issue, which he has so rightly raised, without giving us any indication of how he would approach the basic problem of beef within the CAP. There was no word about how he or the alliance would deal with that. I do not think that it is possible to be taken seriously if one does not address the problems seriously. His speech was in stark contrast to the shorter but appropriate speech of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I do not agree with the policy that he put forward about repatriation, but at least he attempted to consider the basic problem of the

beef industry in Europe. However, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland again failed to tell us what he would do about the problem.

In the decisions taken in December, we sought to reach an agreement that would enable us to begin to produce a beef policy for the Community which would not mean that vast sums of money were spent without adequately supporting the British farmer. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries so clearly said, the real problem is that we spend all that money but his constituents, and others like them, have not seen the support that they should for the enterprises that are so important to those parts of the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland did not address that problem. I must advise him that he will not command respect for his policy if he will not address the real problems. It was to tackle that problem that we had the debate and discussions about the beef industry. In trying to solve the problem of over-production in the dairy industry, we were aware that cull cows would come on to the market. We had to face that problem also.

The result of that deal in December was much better for the British beef industry than it was for other countries. I know that the hon. Gentleman does not believe that. I was interested to check to see what he said about it. In the Scottish Grand Committee on 19 January 1987, he said:

"there is not much doubt that other beef producers in the rest of the Community"—

he excluded Ireland—

"are better placed than we are as a result of these negotiations." — [*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 19 January 1987; c. 88.]

That is precisely untrue. The fact is that British beef producers are less hard hit than those of other member states.

I have given the hon. Gentleman the figures before and I shall give them to him again. I shall then take up the point that he made. Whereas we expect the market support levels to fall by about £36 per head in the United Kingdom, the support level for French bulls will fall by £80 and by £40 for French steers. In Italy and Germany, the drop will be between £115 and £120 a beast. The hon. Gentleman said that their beasts are bigger than ours and that therefore the drop does not count. In that case, let us use the percentage basis. The percentage fall in the United Kingdom is 6·2 per cent. and in Germany it is 12·3 per cent.

Therefore, I stick to my point, that in difficult circumstances, when the Community was spending money that it could ill afford and when it was well over budget, the money was not reaching the people whom it was supposed to help. In that situation, the deal that was done for Britain was considerably better than those which were made for other countries. The hon. Gentleman must accept that those are the facts.

I agree that that does not help the beef producer who looks at his own budget and sees how difficult times are. However, the hon. Gentleman must not say that we did not achieve a better deal than other countries. That could be proved by asking any of the other European Ministers which country they thought did best out of the deal. I believe that they would unanimously say that it was the United Kingdom.

The hon. Gentleman said that somehow or other that deal was bad for Britain. However, he did not mention the retention of the beef variable premium scheme — *[Interruption.]* If he did so, he mentioned it in a curmudgeonly way. He did not say, "My goodness, we are pleased about this." However, the hon. Member for East Lothian generously and helpfully said that it was a good thing that we retained the BVPS.

I remind the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that, in the debate on the rural economy, he said:

Those variable premiums are essential to buttress our beef and sheepmeat production. I hope that, in their negotiations with the European Community, the Government will stand firm on variable beef premiums which are under threat at present.—[*Official Report*, 29 January; Vol 90, c. 1029.]

Indeed they were under threat. We stood firm and have maintained the BVPS for two years to come, which is a longer period than has been achieved previously. But the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, afraid that the Government might gain any support, said, "It is bad because of the Irish advantage on the clawback arrangements." I am happy to agree with him that in some ways the present relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is unsatisfactory, but he cannot complain about the Government on this issue. The position on clawback predates our membership of the EC and was maintained in the negotiations which established the BVPS by the Labour Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who is now in the other place. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman cannot blame this Government for what has always been an integral part of the BVPS, even under the Government whom he supported, although he is right that the present position is unsatisfactory.

The hon. Gentleman is particularly difficult to deal with, because he argues that there shall be no party politics but a moderate, reasonable approach and then makes a speech which, until the last three paragraphs, was entirely about party politics and how the Government had not done this, that and the other. In contrast, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries put the case for beef producers extremely well and pointed to their problems. He mentioned the need for and importance of the suckler cow premium. I thank him for his support for that other important element of this excellent deal. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland did not even give us the credit for increasing, with great difficulty and against the wishes of most of our colleagues in the Council of Ministers, the amount of suckler cow premium that could be paid. He is determined to play party politics with anything that comes before the House.

My hon. Friend was right to say that we now have that headroom. It will be part of the package that we must consider for the beef industry during the price-fixing negotiations. It is not for me to say when debates take place, but I meet the hon. Gentleman in his demand that we should discuss these matters, and I hope we shall do so before long. There is a great deal of negotiation to do yet; we are only beginning on the small foothills of this mountain of negotiations. He will have plenty of time to put his points to Ministers.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I shall not give way, because I want to answer the hon. Gentleman point by point. I did not interrupt him, although I was sorely tempted on several occasions.

The hon. Gentleman was not as generous as he might have been expected to be in that he did not acknowledge

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that in the beef package presented to the House in December the United Kingdom established a system which did least damage to the British beef industry in terms of the effect on the carcase price. It maintained for two years the BVPS, which most thought we would find impossible and which the NFU wanted most. I know that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor, with his customary generosity, would support me in that. We increased the opportunity to pay the suckler cow premium and we ensured that a premium was introduced for other countries. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland must not attack that.

The policy of the United Kingdom must be to ensure that we move towards less intervention and more support to help to reduce the price paid by the housewife. The hon. Member for East Lothian is absolutely right. One of the advantages of the beef variable premium scheme is that it enables the price in the shops to be affected so that more beef is eaten. I agree that beef is very good food. It is a proper part of a balanced diet and we encourage the consumption of beef by ensuring that the price is as low as it can be. The variable premium system helps to reduce the price in the shops while at the same time supporting the return for the producer.

We have never been able to convince other people in the European Community that the premium system is a good thing. The fact that they have now taken on a premium system which is nowhere near good enough for us means that we could not have accepted it. It applies first of all only to male animals and has a top headage limit of 50 animals. Of course, it was set at a level far too low to achieve in the market what the BVPS could achieve. Therefore we could not accept that system. However, we could welcome it in the sense that farmers who have grown used to the premium system are more likely to pressurise their Governments to show them that that is the right way forward. All hon. Members thought that that was a good thing.

The hon. Member for East Lothian invariably attacks me for many things, but I do not think that he has ever seriously attacked me for deceit. I would not in any way want to mislead the House. The fact is that the 435 inelegantly named "mecu" were included in the budget and they are available to be used to take cull cows off the market. The only problem quoted by *Agra Europe* is that the figure does not appear separately. But as it would not normally appear so in the budget. There should be no problem in practice.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maclennan *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I am trying to answer specific questions. I was asked to give that assurance. That assurance is absolute. There is no difficulty about it. It is available and the Commission will use that money.

Mr. Maclennan: The real issue is not whether the Minister misled the House about this. There was clearly some discussion about the matter. The real issue is, will the money be used and when? The farming community believes that it is urgent that the money is used, and used soon.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. The Commission quite clearly announced the amount of money concerned and said that it would be used to take the cull cows off the market. That is quite clear and was understood by all members of the Council, and no one denies that. The amount of money is in the budget for that purpose.

The money has not actually been used so far because we have not entered the marketing year in which the effects of the other matters take place. However, I assure the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland that the money will be used. There is no difficulty about that and he need have no further worries about it. I will keep him in touch with matters so that he knows how the money is used and the circumstances in which we get the cull cows into third markets.

I want to support the strong demand by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries that we should recognise the difficulties of the beef industry. However, I must tell the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland that it does not help the beef industry to overstate the problems. We must get a sense of balance here. The hon. Member for East Lothian is quite right to state that there has been a reduction in the herd. There has been an increase in the proportion of the home market that is met by home-produced beef.

One of the reasons for the reduction in the herd is that there has been a considerable reduction in the consumption of beef, although that has now been slightly reversed. It is not true that the beef suckler herd has dropped in size each year since 1979. The December 1986 figures show that the beef breeding herd is 1 per cent. larger than it was in December 1985. That is not a huge difference, but we must not overstate the problems of the industry.

What are we to do about the real problems? I have taken on board what has been said about the green pound. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland came out with a marvellous comment on the 6 per cent. green pound devaluation. He said that it was a distortion which should have been rectified by the Government. If the Government could have rectified it, we would have done so on the day that the green punt was changed, because that change had an inescapable effect on the British market. The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand the system. We did not rectify it because there can be a change only if the Council of Ministers agrees and the Commission presents the Council of Ministers with a case for change.

The hon. Gentleman sits there comfortably and says that we should have had the devaluation the next day. If the hon. Gentleman had spent as much time as I and my right hon. Friend spent trying to persuade the other countries, all of which opposed us bar one, which wanted a bit extra for itself, he would understand that we were extremely fortunate to have had a result by December.

It is all very well for the alliance to tell everyone how it would have achieved everything at once, but it has not once said what it would have done. That is the real criticism of the hon. Gentleman's speech. He came here to complain about everything that the Government have done and made no reference to what he would have done. We are used to that. I have taken every speech that the hon. Gentleman has made in the past two years, and I can find not one occasion when a coherent alternative policy has been presented.

The hon. Member for East Lothian is not like that. He may have the wrong policy, but at least it is a policy and we know where we are. The alliance has only one policy.

It is two-tier pricing, which would mean that beef animals in the area that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland represents would compete with beef produced in the richer east of England. The other part of alliance policy was shown in the Bledisloe lecture, which should be read closely. People who do not like it should read the lecture given by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor to the Catholic Institute for International Relations and World Wildlife Fund joint operation. He suggested there that it would be a good idea to have a moratorium on technological advance in western agriculture.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must allow me to continue.

We should consider the effect of such a moratorium on the beef industry. It would have meant that much of what is important to the industry would not have happened. We would not have the quick finishing system, we would not have gone on with the rota-viral diarrhoea vaccine and we would not now be considering the new arrangements to try to find means to reduce losses in beef calves. We would have none of that technology. That is the hon. Gentleman's policy.

Mr. Livsey: The Minister is talking rubbish, and he knows it.

Mr. Gummer: I am merely stating what the hon. Gentleman presented to the meeting at which I was present.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries asked me to give an assurance that we will fight for the British beef producer in the coming negotiations. I can assure him of that, and that we will try to get the best possible deal. We have taken close note of his view on the green pound, which will play a major part in our negotiations. We will have to see how the suckler cow premium fits into the negotiations and how alterations to other parts of the policy can benefit the livestock producer generally. There is no doubt that many of the livestock producers' problems have derived from the high prices that have been obtained for feed, and that is an important part of any such policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries was also right to remind us that this is part of an overall policy and that it includes the way in which we have supported other livestock enterprises, particularly sheep, and includes the imaginative series of alternatives which have been put before the House in the announcements of recent weeks.

In the end, the Government are determined to do what they can to ensure that the beef industry gets through the difficult period ahead, not least because all the indications are that at the end of some 18 months there will be better times in terms of the market, of the coming forward of cows from the dairy industry and of the forecasts of OECD and other organisations.

This is a difficult period for the beef industry and we have a duty to do what we can to ensure that we support it, for, as my hon. Friend said, it is a long-term industry; it cannot be turned on and off or held up for short periods. It must have secure and sensible support, and that the Government are determined to provide.

Nuclear Power

11.42 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): When fire was first discovered people must have made it clear that it was extremely dangerous, and they were right to point that out. But if our ancestors had not been prepared to make use of fire, we would probably still be living in caves today.

Vastly larger numbers of people have died from accidents due to fire in the last few years than from accidents due to nuclear power generation, including Chernobyl, which would not and could not have happened here. In the 10 years up to 31 March 1985, there were unfortunately 388 fatal accidents in the coal industry. In the 10 years to February 1987, there were 10 deaths in the nuclear industry in the United Kingdom, and none of those was caused by radioactivity.

The Department of the Environment has confirmed that there has never been any hazard to the public caused by the movement of spent fuel and that the low accident rate of the United Kingdom nuclear industry is second to none. The excellent document which I hold in my hand entitled "Here Be No Dragons" states clearly that the odds of an individual losing his or her life through accident in relations to cars in any one year is one in 8,000 whereas in relation to nuclear accidents it is one in 10 million.

Of course, the generation of power has drawbacks—such as acid rain from coal-fired power stations—but we must generate power or freeze. Basically, we must weigh up the risks and not allow our emotions and fear of all forms of nuclear warfare overcome us and confuse our rational judgment. We need energy, and we need nuclear energy if we are to have any hope of helping with the immense task of enhancing living standards. With the ever-increasing numbers in the world's population, we need all the energy we can get, and that means harnessing nuclear power, which fortunately appears to be a great deal safer than many realise.

As many wish to take part in this debate, I shall speak briefly about three points: jobs, safety, and the environmental case for nuclear power,. First, jobs. In Scotland today 50 per cent. of the electricity is already nuclear. This is likely to rise to 60 per cent. when Torness is fully operational. It was a Labour Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), who gave clearance for Torness to be built.

Recently I have made inquiries, now that it has been built, about the effect of closing down Torness and phasing out nuclear power. I received a letter from the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board on 29 January in which he wrote:

"The effect on electricity prices can be briefly summarised as follows.

(1) If the Torness station, having been built, were not to be run, this would result in an increase of 10 per cent. in all electricity tariffs throughout Scotland.

(2) In the absence of Torness capacity, it would become necessary in the early 90s to replace it with additional coalfired capacity—an accumulated increase in tariffs of some 20 per cent.; and

(3) If eventually all nuclear power in Scotland were to be closed down and replaced with coalfired stations, there would be an accumulated increase in tariffs of some 30 per cent."

It seems from those facts that, if nuclear power were phased out, electricity tariffs in Scotland would eventually increase by 30 per cent. Quite apart from the effects on

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domestic households, it would certainly greatly increase industry's operating costs, pushing up its prices. An inevitable effect would be that industries would shed labour to pay for increased electricity costs and unemployment would rise. As it happens, unemployment in my constituency is possibly the lowest in Scotland, but, even in my constituency, the threat of higher tariffs would bring with it the prospect of fewer jobs. My constituents want lower unemployment.

It is a matter not just of employment in existing industries but of encouraging new industries to become established in Scotland. Both the Scottish development Agency and the South of Scotland Electricity Board can help considerably in this process. For example, the Roche Products factory at Dalry in Ayrshire recently opened an extension. Apparently, the price of electricity was an important element in winning that project for Scotland in competition with other Roche factories in Europe. To give another example, there was a recent announcement of the Kymmene-Stromberg paper mill at Irvine where, again, the electricity supply on reasonable terms was a substantial part of the operating costs.

As I have already mentioned, nuclear power accounts for 50 per cent. of Scotland's electricity. Our prices would no longer be competitive with those in Europe if nuclear power were phased out. The expertise of the Scottish Development Agency and of the South of Scotland Electricity Board would be to no avail in trying to attract major industrial development to Scotland if there were much higher electricity prices. It would seem that many thousands of jobs in Scotland are dependant on the existence of competitive electricity pricing — electricity which, in turn, is generated by nuclear power.

In Britain as a whole, well over 100,000 persons depend on the nuclear industry for work, either because they are direct employees—there are 44,000 of them—or because their jobs depend in one way or another on the industry. if nuclear power were to be closed down, all these would be lost over the longer term. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will tell the House whether the Sizewell decision will help to guarantee the security of thousands of jobs in Scotland—in Babcock, in Weir and in Howden.

That leads me to the question of safety. Obviously the most rigorous safety requirements are necessary. Recently we have learnt the appalling news of the tragedies at Bhopal in India, at Basel in Switzerland, when the Rhine was poisoned, and, more recently, when there was the extremely serious nuclear accident at Chernobyl. These undoubted tragedies serve to underline the principle that eternal vigilance is the price to be paid not merely for freedom but for all forms of progress which involve technology and the storage of dangerous substances.

I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Minister for reassurances on the subject of Torness. I am, of course, aware that, before it can operate, each nuclear power station has to be licensed by the nuclear installations inspectorate — an independent, expert body, which is part of the Health and Safety Executive. Nuclear reactors are shut down for routine maintenance and examination every two years, and they cannot restart without the consent of the nuclear installations inspectorate. They are therefore subject to a continuous process of review and assessment. I believe that the inspectorate would not accept the operation of any nuclear plant if its safety could not be confirmed.

It will interest the House to know that last year, in my constituency, the Liberals distributed a newsletter with a photograph of Liberals outside Torness together with the caption "Liberals oppose nuclear power", or words to that effect. I was interested by that because I understand that the Social Democrats support nuclear power. Tonight perhaps the alliance will make its policy clear.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *rose*——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian) *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will give way in a moment, but I wish to finish my remarks on this matter.

More recently Liberals have distributed a leaflet in my constituency that alleges that Torness is unsafe — the heading of the leaflet says just that. I regard safety matters at nuclear power stations as being of paramount importance and of the utmost significance. I hope that the Minister will confirm that safety at all nuclear powers stations will be treated as a matter of paramount importance.

Mr. Home Robertson *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall finish this point and then I will give way to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in whose constituency Torness is located.

I hope that the Minister can give the House the most up-to-date information about Torness and state exactly the facts. I hope that he can confirm that absolute safety requirements will be enforced. I believe that it is in the public interest that the facts should be known. It is right that the nuclear installations inspectorate has recently been to Torness.

Mr. Home Robertson: It is not only the Liberals who are unhappy about Torness. I hope that I will not embarrass the hon. Gentleman if I remind him that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), now a Minister at the Scottish Office, and at one time the Member for Berwick and East Lothian, is also on record as being opposed to a nuclear power station at Torness.

The economic and social effects of the Torness development have not been entirely happy. Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the question of the Sizewell inquiry and safety, I must remind him that that inquiry specifically recommended the review of evacuation zones around nuclear power stations. In Britain that zone is only two or three km; in the United States it is 16 km; and we are 2,200 km away from Chernobyl. Does he not agree that there is room for improvement in those zones?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is making a case for civil defence. We have strongly supported the idea of civil defence in civil matters and natural disasters and there is scope for improvement. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is thinking along the same lines.

The hon. Gentleman referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram). I remind him of my hon. Friend's stand in past general elections when he supported nuclear power. Of course, I am aware that all hon. Members are entitled to respond to the needs of their constituents.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the article in *The Scotsman* today by its industrial correspondent, Alex Wattie, who writes:

"Safety is also of paramount importance, particularly following the Chernobyl disaster . . . constant monitoring of the environment, with a regular sampling of milk and locally caught fish, is being carried out by the SSEB".

The article concludes—and I quote these words for the benefit of the hon. Member for East Lothian:

"Its legacy is a nuclear power station, initially manned by 'incomers' to the area, but in the future providing a continuous source of skilled jobs and training in an environment which will foster technical excellence."

I hope that those words will prove correct.

Mr. Beith: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read more carefully the alliance's policy statements. They make it clear that, at this time, Britain does not need to embark on a programme of building nuclear power stations. I hope that he will abandon the notion that there is any such thing in the nuclear industry as absolute safety or absolute safety provision. It is a concept that I believe the nuclear industry finds impossible to apply without throwing aside completely the generous cost assumptions that the hon. Gentleman made earlier about the benefits to be to obtained from nuclear power.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Stringent safety regulations are absolutely necessary. I am interested to hear what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has to say about future power stations, but I am more interested to learn whether he is in favour of closing all existing nuclear power stations. I suspect that he is not; but many of his party are.

In taking up the environmental case for nuclear power, I make a plea for a balanced energy policy that will make use of the massive resources of coal, oil and gas, as well as nuclear power, to ensure a diversity of supply. Nuclear energy has considerable advantages over most other forms of energy generation in its impact on the environment. Emissions from fossil fuels, including sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and carbon dioxide, lead to acid rain, and carbon dioxide is the most significant gas in producing the greenhouse effect. Sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide can be abated, but there is currently no economic, feasible abatement policy for carbon dioxide. Nuclear power generation is almost entirely free of the emission of these pollutants, which have caused so much controversy throughout western Europe, especially in Sweden.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister confirm that overall the coal-fired power stations emit more radiation than nuclear power stations? I understand that the debate about the greenhouse effect is still in the realms of scientific controversy, but one theory is that the amount of carbon dioxide will lead to a raising of temperature levels in the lower atmosphere surrounding the earth. Ultimately this would lead to a heating of the world's atmosphere to such an extent that the polar caps would melt, with the result that much of the world would be submerged. Scotland might be cut in two and much of Galloway might be submerged. But this is still in the realms of scientific speculation.

We should have the moral courage as a nation to come to terms with scientific developments within an entirely safe framework, but it seems that much more should be learnt about the environmental case for nuclear power. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will encourage research and will give a commitment on this issue. It is highly desirable that Britain and other countries should co-operate effectively, both nationally and internationally, on measures to safeguard the environment for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

11.58 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): We have listened to an extremely good speech of importance to all concerned. It is good to see the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in his place. I noted with some interest his comment on Torness, which we hope will come into operation shortly. He did not tell us whether the Labour party, if it formed a Government after the next general election, would close Torness and place all those involved in it in unemployment. I notice that the hon. Gentleman is not springing to his feet——

Mr. Home Robertson: Having taken part in an earlier debate, I understood that it would not be in order for me to speak again in this debate. I acknowledge that, if Torness is commissioned and the reactors are functioning, it would not be realistic to decommission it. That may be an answer to the hon. Gentleman's comment.

Sir Trevor Skeet: We are beginning to find that the Labour party, the Liberal party, the Social Democratic party and the alliance all have different policies. There are in fact four different policies. It is the Labour party's policy not to commission new stations. The hon. Member for East Lothian has stated his view honestly and told us that if Torness is commissioned he will utilise its power. How wise he is in the circumstances.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): There are many views in all parts of the House about nuclear power. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would do the House a service by explaining whether he considers the opposition of the Government Chief Whip—a senior member of the Government—to the reception of low-level nuclear waste in his constituency constitutes opposition to nuclear power, or support for it.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am talking about power stations, not about nuclear waste. The hon. Gentleman was wise to intervene, however. He has Dounreay in his constituency, the only fast breeder reactor in the United Kingdom. The station forms part of the Government's policy, and it will be maintained. It is worth reading the document entitled "The Time Has Come", written by two gentlemen—Owen and Steel—in 1987. It says on page 59:

"Whilst these areas remain our priority for research and development, we would continue research into nuclear fusion power including research into the fast-breeder reactor, which may be needed if renewable resources prove to be less viable than we believe. We remain committed to the Joint European Torus . . . nuclear fusion project."

Of course, as it is the hon. Gentleman's own station he will not close down the fast breeder or any of the reprocessing plants — the lot are to remain. Let us examine the Liberal party's policy. The Liberal policy is to close the lot down—not only the power stations but all the reprocessing plants. I am afraid that Liberal party policy was established at the party conference and has come out from time to time.

Mr. Beith: Never on any occasion has the Liberal party favoured closing down all the places at which reprocessing is carried out. Indeed, the continued operation of Sellafield is essential to ensure the safe containment of existing nuclear waste.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The interesting thing about phasing out all nuclear power stations is that reprocessing facilities will ultimately not be required. Does the hon. Gentleman deny that point?

There are roughly 25 nuclear power establishments and other facilities in the United Kingdom. I have mentioned Dounreay, the fast reactor, which we are proud to have in Scotland. That is one in the SDP constituency of Caithness and Sutherland. Calder Hall, a Magnox reactor, is in the Copeland constituency. The Hartlepool reactor is in the constituency of a Labour Member. I believe that it is an AGR. There is another Magnox reactor in Wales, in a constituency belonging to Plaid Cymru. There is an AGR reactor at Torness near Edinburgh in the constituency of the Labour Member for East Lothian. It is most extraordinary that the policy of the Labour and Liberal parties is to close them down. To so do would cause substantial unemployment.

An honest view was expressed by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). The first decade's work for THORP is already guaranteed, and work for the second decade is being shortened. To break contracts would involve the Government in huge compensation claims. The damage to Britain as a trading nation would be serious. There is no question of a Labour Government embarking on a policy in any industry that would result in wholesale job losses. Sellafield must remain with its processing plant.

The Liberals and others are trying to have it both ways. They are going to do what the French did when the French Socialist Government was formed a few years ago. The French were going to destroy all their nuclear power stations, but when they got into power they wisely reversed their policies. The reason why Liberal Members have followed this route—the green environmental route—is simply to gain more votes. They are more interested in votes than in principles.

I have mentioned many names. I shall go a little further. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) mentioned some of the employment implications that would be created by the Labour and alliance parties. British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. is well known to everyone. It employees 16,500 people in Britain. If we consider the whole nuclear industry, we realise that about 150,000 people are directly and indirectly employed. The company has a capital investment programme that works out at an average of £1 million a day for the next 10 years. The total is about £3·7 billion. Furthermore, 90 per cent. of this investment is with British firms, and 70 per cent. of it is in regions of high unemployment. Is it not extraordinary that the alliance wishes to destroy part of Britain's industrial base, and that it also wishes to destroy the Government's policy for regions of high unemployment? We seek to create employment, but the alliance seeks to create unemployment.

BNFL has a turnover of £629 million, with exports accounting for approximately a third of that turnover. It has firm orders that are worth over £4 billion for the first 10 years capacity of a plant that is being built, and two thirds of those orders are from overseas customers. It is also the biggest yen earner in the United Kingdom.

It is most extraordinary that this bunch of — I was going to say jackals, but I shall not say it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] No; I did not say it. I said that I was going to say it. It is extraordinary that this bunch of politicians want to destroy all that has been built up over the years. I am referring, not to energy policy, but to the facilities created and the amount of compensation that would have to be paid for the cancellation of orders. The company is servicing both United Kingdom industry and overseas industry.

Mr. Home Robertson: Nobody would accuse the hon. Gentleman of being a politician. As he is so concerned about areas of high unemployment and other aspects of energy policy, will he say something about the effects of the Government's policies, which he supports, on the coal mining industry?

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am not an amateur. We are talking about nuclear power. I do not intend to be drawn into a discussion of the coal mining industry. However, the coal industry is in great difficulties. The price of United Kingdom coal is very much higher than the world price of coal. The CEGB has to pay on average about £42 a tonne for it. The world price of coal is very much lower than that. I think that we had better keep off coal for the time being.

Mr. Beith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No, I want to make a little progress with my speech. It is so disappointing that the Liberal party has no realistic policy for the nuclear power industry.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman will not allow me to say anything.

Sir Trevor Skeet: When the Liberal party gets together with the Social Democratic party the policy is even more disastrous.

As for the nuclear power versus coal argument, the nuclear industry has a clear advantage. I have figures here that show that, taking Hinkley Point B and Drax, the difference between the two prices gives the nuclear industry a very considerable cost advantage. There are seven ways by which this can be assessed. To be fair, one of them favours the coal industry, but all the others favour the nuclear industry. The price is about 2·09p/kw hour, as opposed to Drax, which is 2·26p/kw hour. That was also borne out by the Layfield report, which said that it would be much better to build Sizewell B than to go ahead with the building of coal-fired power stations. However, the alliance wishes us to erect windmills, to go ahead with the Severn estuary barrage and to turn to biomass and all the other alternatives that will be unable to contribute very much to our energy resources by 2000 AD.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Gentleman has just referred to comparative figures. Is he able to say whether the figure that he gave for Hinkley Point B included any element for the decommissioning of that power station at the end of its active life, and whether it also includes the sums that must inevitably be spent on reprocessing waste and ultimately disposing of that waste?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman. I was just coming on to that point.

I have a letter from the chairman of the CEGB, dated 12 March 1987. It says:

"The analysis makes full provision for the costs of decommissioning each reactor and for the disposal of radioactive waste."

The matters which the hon. Gentleman thought has not been included have been, and if he would like a copy of this letter I shall be only too glad to send him one.

I shall mention one or two other matters to be taken into consideration when we are dealing with this important issue of nuclear energy. Nuclear energy is safe, appropriate and many countries have it. It is worth noting that the Japanese obtain 27 per cent. of their electricity from nuclear energy. By 1995 the figure will be 35 per cent., and later on over 60 per cent. In West Germany, since Chernobyl, the government have confirmed that four further power stations will come into operation by 1990. At present 98 nuclear reactors are operating in the United States, with a further 27 expected to come on stream in the next few years. After Chernobyl one would have thought that the Soviet Union would be a little concerned about some of its errors in design, but it has decided to double its capacity over the next decade.

What do we find? People the world over are building nuclear power stations because of the many advantages of nuclear power. We find that in 1986 there were 21 completions of reactors in eight states, making a world total of about 394, and that comprises 15 per cent. of world electricity capacity. I am quite sure that the Minister will mention this. For the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate safety is a paramount consideration and successive inquiries have shown that nuclear energy is a safe way of dealing with these matters.

I give another illustration from France. It has a nuclear generating capacity of about 65 per cent. of total electricity and industry pays about 30 per cent. less for its electricity than it does in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No; I have given way a lot to the hon. Gentleman. He asks unimportant questions. I hope that he will make his own contribution, I am sure, bearing in mind some of the strictures that I have made with regard to alliance policy, that he would want to say something on this.

France can produce electricity well below the costs of production of the CEGB in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wallace: What about the subsidies? Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: In the United Kingdom the coal industry is heavily subsidised, as the hon. Gentleman possibly knows. Coal is not sold at world prices; it is sold at special prices in the United Kingdom. The nuclear industry in France is doing remarkably well and it is not being subsidised by the Government. It is beginning to pay off its loans, due to the profitability of the electricity that it is producing. If it is economic for France to produce nuclear energy—it is producing over 65 per cent. of its electricity by nuclear means—why are we being anxious about pursuing this course? We must congratulate the Government on the course that they have taken.

I realise that I should not take up too much time. This is a Consolidated Fund debate and many important matters are being considered. The alliance is in a complete shambles. It does not know where it stands on nuclear power. In 20 years' time the Labour party will awake from its sleep and realise what a mistake it has made. Fortunately, Britain has one saving grace. It has a Conservative Government and is likely to have a further one. I am quite certain that people will back us if we say that we will go ahead with our nuclear policy, which has not only proved beneficial to the United Kingdom but has proved useful to industry. Nuclear energy is also valuable to the consumer, who wants a cheap and inexpensive form of heating.

12.15 am

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I should like to pay a warm and generous tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) who made an outstanding speech. He had the good fortune to open this debate, and his speech reflects the greatest possible credit upon him and on the constituency that he serves with such diligence.

I should like to tell hon. Members how nuclear power affects my constituency. I have a solemn duty to represent my constituents on this subject. My constituency consumes large quantities of energy, because it is in the centre of an area of Britain of which I am immensley proud —the black country, which has heavy engineering and manufacturing industries of all kinds. I draw to the attention of the House the largest employer in my constituency, the hand-cut crystal glass industry which has such wonderful companies as Royal Brierley, Stuart Crystal, Webb Corbett and Wordsley Crystal.

As a conscientious Member of Parliament, I regularly visit the companies in this industry. When I have discussions with the people there, they speak strongly on two points. They say, "In financial terms, Mr. Member of Parliament, because our business is so centred on exports, we must have an exchange rate of about £1·50 because that makes us very competitive."

Their second telling point is related to this debate. They say, "Keep our energy costs low." By doing that we enable those companies to be competitive and they can create jobs. Every hon. Member must be dominated in his constituency work by the creation of jobs. It is a reflection on the Government and, dare I say it, on the efforts that I have sought to make that in the last 15 months that unemployment in my constituency has dropped from 16·4 per cent. to the current level of 12·2 per cent. This did not happen by chance. It happened because positive policies are being pursued that reflect the fact that we are consumers of energy.

The most important thing to which the House should address itself is the end result of nuclear power. The message that I give to the House from Dudley, West is that it means jobs. What is the Government's strategy on energy sources? I quietly and soberly researched the answer to that question and I give it to the Minister who will reply to the debate. We have massive supplies and reserves of coal, oil and gas, but this debate is about something else. We have a long experience of civil nuclear power.

In this uncertain world, it is not possible to predict the future with any accuracy. This country must make full use of all its resources by having complete diversity of supply and not becoming over-dependent on any one fuel. Many questions have been asked in this House about the coal industry.

It is as crystal-clear as the glass that is made in my constituency that the Government invest £2 million per day in the British coal industry with the aim of creating a successful coal mining industry that can offer reliable supplies of coal at competitive prices. The Government, encouraged by the exploitation of the oil supplies surrounding Britain, know that this investment will give

[Dr. John G. Blackburn]

operators the confidence to make long-term decisions. In addition, energy requirements can be met if we continue to encourage the safe development of civil nuclear power.

I have established the need of my constituents to have jobs and safe energy supplies. I have conveyed to this House the message that we need critically this competitive supply of energy. It is foolish to stand up in this House and degrade or abandon nuclear power. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West said, to abandon nuclear power would create an undisputed increase of at least 15 per cent. in energy costs.

Such an increase in energy costs would have a dramatic and damaging effect on jobs in my constituency, and responsibility for that would lie at the feet of those who pursue a policy of abandoning nuclear power. Job losses in my constituency would be considerable, and 185,000 jobs would be lost in the nuclear industry itself. I, as a Member of this House, would never subscribe to that. We want competitive energy in my constituency.

I believe that, when the pages of history are written, they will record the decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to go down the avenue of pursuing nuclear power as one of the bravest and most courageous actions—based on common sense, commerce and economics—that has ever been taken by a British Government.

I speak with some feeling when I tell the House that on 26 April last year I was in Poland. I travelled through Poland and East Germany into east Berlin. When I went through Checkpoint Charlie and came into west Berlin, I was astonished at what happened to me. I was quizzed in considerable detail and given strict medical instructions about the possibility that I might be subject to radioactive fallout from Chernobyl. It is an indictment of the Soviet Union that in that situation the authorities did not tell their own people that that disaster had taken place. It was only when I returned to this country that, I am proud to tell the House, medical supervison was given to all the people who had travelled through that area. That reflected the greatest possible credit on our medical teams, to whom I pay tribute.

This morning, I had a delightful task to perform. I was taken to the Upper Waiting Room, in the corridors of this House, and I had the opportunity, which I counted as a privilege, to introduce my hon. Friend the Minister from the Department of the Environment to open an exhibition on the emissions of waste and toxic fumes from motor cars. I commend that exhibition to every hon. Member, and I applaud the fact that 1987 has been designated as European Year of the Environment. The environment is an important feature in a debate about nuclear fuel. It is critically important that we have not only safer energy, which I have stressed, not only competitive energy, which I have outlined, but energy which will have a limited adverse effect on the environment that we all love so dearly.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister, from the case that has been presented, to recognise that there is a need for further research—nationally and internationally. I am pleased to say that on the last occasion that the House debated the Consolidated Fund, I was fortunate enough to lead on the first subject, civil defence. If hon. Members are interested enough to look through the pages of *Hansard* for that debate, they will realise that civil defence is a question not of war but of being able to provide facilities and support for any emergency that may take place, particularly in nuclear energy.

The message from my constituency is simple. We want energy. We consume energy and we want it at a competitive price, and we would condemn the Opposition parties if they ever had the chance of pursuing their policies, because they would increase energy costs by 15 per cent. I wish to safeguard the future employment of the constituents that I have the honour to represent in this House. I salute my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West for the great service that he has done the House by raising this subject for debate.

12.28 am

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): My hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) knows my constituency well. I shall say a few words about the effect that this debate will have in my constituency. I speak in the knowledge that I have subject number 35 in the debate. In reasonable anticipation that that subject, the development of north-west Wales, will not be reached before the House concludes the debate, I have packed my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales off to bed, and decided instead to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this debate.

The debate is relevant to north-west Wales not least because two of the proposed sites for new nuclear power stations are at Trawsfyndd and in my constituency at Wylfa. I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy on the Front Bench, because he knows my constituency well. It was a great pleasure and privilege for me to invite him to my constituency to tour Wylfa recently.

Wylfa can be described as the jewel in the crown of the Central Electricity Generating Board. Indeed, when, after the Chernobyl incident, Greenpeace published a full-page advertisement in leading newspapers stating two categories of nuclear power stations, those it thought should be closed down immediately and those it thought should be phased out over a period, I noted with interest that Wylfa did not appear in either list. I thought that Greenpeace had made a mistake, and I was not going to let that pass. I thought that I would gain some political capital out of it by issuing a press release stating how marvellous it was that Greenpeace has supported the retention of Wylfa because it had not been mentioned in either of the lists. I did Greenpeace a disservice. It was not negligence on its part to have excluded Wylfa from either of the two lists; in fact, it was a deliberate policy. That merely endorses the description I have already given of that power station as the jewel in the crown of the CEGB. Its safety record is second to none.

The important point is that we will be considering whether there should be a new nuclear power station when Wylfa comes to the end of its life at about the turn of the century. Sadly, it has become a party political issue. I have stated clearly, on behalf of my constituents, that I believe that the majority of them want to see a new nuclear power station there, not only in their own interests, but in the interests of the nation as a whole. All three of my political opponents, the Labour party, Plaid Cymru and the Social Democratic party, are against the power stations. I always forget whether it is the Liberal party or the Social Democratic party, because it changes from time to time. I believe that it is SDP at present but as the SDP candidate

lost his deposit in the 1983 election and the Liberal candidate lost his deposit in 1979 I am not particularly concerned. They started their lives by saying, effectively, that all nuclear power should be terminated forthwith but now, no doubt in the light of popular demand, they have decided that we should not have a second nuclear power station but that Wylfa should be allowed to see its natural life to its conclusion.

They are short sighted, even from a parochial point of view, because Wylfa represents job opportunities for some 1,000 of my constituents. Over 600 of them are employed directly and jobs in the downstream industries in companies such as Anglesey Scaffolding and others, which are directly reliant upon Wylfa nuclear power station, would disappear if there were not to be a replacement for Wylfa.

Indeed, it goes beyond that. I have recently been in communication with the managing director of Anglesey Aluminium who confirms that, although it would be foolish to pretend that the company would not be put in jeopardy principally as a result of a failure to have Wylfa B, nevertheless, its continuance would be put in greater doubt if there were not to be a nuclear power station there because, in times of difficulty with transmission lines across the water on to the main line, Anglesey Aluminium, which has to operate a 24-hour production line because of its productive method would be inhibited by not having that direct link of power which it presently obtains from Wylfa. That is another 700 or more jobs that could be put in jeopardy.

What is pleasant in the debate we have had so far is that the main arguments in favour of nuclear power have not been put on that parochial level, but on a far wider level of the general benefit to the United Kingdom. That is how I wish to continue my remarks. I believe that we need a nuclear power industry to provide for the future energy needs of this country.

I welcome the fact that the Government have devoted increased resources to research into alternative energy sources. There is a large scheme at Cardigan bay, researching windmill power. However, I believe that photovoltaic cells will probably ultimately provide the most fruitful source of alternative power. Those matters are in the incipient stages of research at present and they will not come fulness for a long time. We need to ensure that this country's competitiveness and the needs of the elderly, who will need heat in cold weather, will not be jeopardised by short-term, foolish ideas based on the foolish belief that they are populist, when in fact they do not coincide with the wishes of the majority of people in this country.

I was heartened by a recent opinion poll that was commissioned by the BBC, which was making a programme about my constituency, which it regarded as a marginal seat—for the life of me, I cannot think why. However, it commissioned an opinion poll to be carried out by Beaufort Research, a professional firm of pollsters in Cardiff. If I may digress briefly, that poll showed that I would obtain 38 per cent. of the vote, the Labour party 30 per cent. and Plaid Cymru 20 per cent. However, I take no comfort from that.

The main reason why I mention that poll is that it showed that, when asked whether they wanted nuclear power to be retained or expanded, the great majority of people replied in the affirmative. That shows the wishes of the majority of the British people, who are far too sensible and who understand far too readily that we need a nuclear power industry to provide a major contribution to our energy, and who are not over-swayed by the problems that may have been indentified about nuclear power in the past.

It is interesting to note that the exhaustive Layfield report on Sizewell contains several note worthy quotations about the safety record. Paragraph 2.124(c), for example, states:

"the safety record of the CEGB is outstanding by any standards".

Paragraph 2.125 states:

"I am confident that such reliance is justified. My confidence is founded principally of the quality of the CEGB's and the NII's evidence, and the way in which it withstood searching and extensive examination. Both organisations demonstrated an impressive degree of technical competence. No significant shortcomings were revealed."

One can say, with fairness, that we have the safest nuclear industry anywhere in the world, not least because of the independence and the investigative powers of the nuclear installations inspectorate, which is almost unique to this country.

The greatest recent threat or challenge to nuclear power was the terrible disaster of Chernobyl which directly affected my constituency. The radiocaesium levels in the sheep confronted the sheep farmers with grave difficulties; they were unable to take their sheep to market for a substantial period, with all the consequent financial loss. Chernobyl demonstrated, beyond all measure, that even if we relinquished all nuclear power forthwith — if that could be done — we should still be subject to the problems of the nuclear power industry in any other country. Chernobyl proved that we cannot stand in isolation. Unless one increases the powers of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or in some way provides greater safeguards for those countries with safety standards lower than our own, we shall still be subject to their problems. That is noteworthy because, if we do away with our nuclear power in the fallacious belief that that will safeguard our citizens in some way; we do so in the face of Chernobyl, which demonstrated that completely the opposite is the case.

I have already welcomed the additional resources that the Government have made available. When we talk about alternative energy, that includes the Severn barrage. The Severn is generally reckoned to be the most advantageous site in the world for such a barrage. Yet, even if that barrage were miraculously built and operated at maximum efficiency from tomorrow, it could provide no more than 5 per cent. of our total energy needs at today's demand level, not to mention the demand level when the construction would be complete in 15 years' time if the decision were taken now to proceed with the scheme.

The case for nuclear power as has been made without a shadow of doubt. It is conclusive at parochial level for the jobs that depend on it and, more important, at national level as British industry must continue to be competitive with countries which have embraced nuclear power and are now beginning to derive the benefits from it.

The industry can be shown to be inherently safe. Our safety standards are in advance of any other, if not all other, countries. The pollution that emanates from coal-fired power stations and other forms of energy production is absent from nuclear energy production.

Mr. Beith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Best: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have just reached my peroration. I hope that he may make his speech.

Our safety record and the needs of the future demand that we continue to have a significant amount of our energy produced by nuclear power. I compliment the Government on having the courage to determine that that should be the case.

12.41 am

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): It would be churlish of the House not to congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) on his good fortune in having this subject included in this debate on the Consolidated Fund. Nuclear power is an emotive issue and it does not do any good if we challenge the sincerity of individual speeches. We may question hon. Members' judgment, but that is a different matter. I do not challenge the sincerity of any hon. Members, but I question their judgment.

The logic of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) is peculiar and perverted. He painted what we in Scotland know as the doomsday scenario: because nuclear power is generated all round the world and is unsafe, if an accident occurs we shall share the full horrors of it. He spoke of doubts about the environmental effect of nuclear power and mentioned recent opinion poll results. He was on dangerous ground there, because in Scotland the polls show 47 per cent. for Labour, 19 per cent. for the Tories, 19 per cent. for the alliance and 11 per cent. for the Scottish National party. If we pursued the hon. Gentleman's logic, we would say that, therefore, the majority of Scottish people are against nuclear power. *[Interruption.]* I am not seeking to argue with the hon. Gentleman or to offend him; I am pursuing his logic and showing him the danger of calling opinion polls in aid.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West made a fair case and tackled the question in three parts: jobs, safety and the environment. He would not expect me to agree with his figures for the cost of electricity, if we do not have nuclear power. He is well aware that the Coalfields Community Council produced a research document. The document considers what would happen if we did not have nuclear power. According to that document, there would have to be an increase of 10 per cent. in generation production in the United Kingdom as a whole and a 19 per cent. increase in Scotland. There is a difference of opinion in these matters. However, that report has been well documented and was produced by Stephen Fothergill, who is an economic lecturer at Reading university, on behalf of the Coalfields Communities campaign.

We must consider safety. Quoting statistics of mining disasters in relation to the number of people who have lost their lives in that industry is not sufficient. Indeed, one of those statistics was my father. I would not agree with an analogy drawn between what happens in a mining disaster and what happens in a nuclear disaster. A mining disaster affects only that particular area. In a mining disaster, that area need not be sterilised for hundreds or even thousands of years. However, if a nuclear disaster befalls us it could affect the whole of Europe.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West also referred to the Sizewell decision. I am entitled to answer the hon. Gentleman's points as I see matters. The hon. Gentleman referred to jobs in Scotland. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman read the report of the debate on Sizewell in the House. That was a very interesting debate. Even with his contacts, he would find that if he was to call in aid Babcock Power Ltd. with regard to jobs, he would have to admit that it was on record that Babcock has stated that it would be perfectly happy to build any kind of plant for which it would be responsible if that was a coal-fired power station. The whole question of Sizewell hingeing on the job opportunities of Babcock Power Ltd. according to the company's statement is not valid and does not make the point.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West referred to jobs. He must be well aware of the fact that the Scottish coal industry has suffered a significant contraction since the end of the miner's strike. Employment in the industry has fallen from nearly 14,000 at the time of the strike to below 6,000. Capacity has been rationalised in British Coal's so-called survival plan with the closure of Comrie colliery and the merging of operations at Monktonhall and Bilston Glen in Lothian and Barony and Killoch in Ayrshire. I know that the hon. Gentleman is aware of those facts.

The Scottish coal industry, like that in Great Britain as a whole, remains heavily dependent upon one customer — the electricity generation industry. During the early 1980s, this dependence declined somewhat, but in 1985-86 the South of Scotland Electricity Board—accounted for two thirds of British Coal's output sold in Scotland. In turn, the SSEB has traditionally purchased most of its supplies of coal from British Coal. Under the purchase agreement signed in 1985, 90 per cent. of the SSEB's annual coal requirements for electricity generation to Scottish customers would be purchased from British Coal. In 1985-86, 92 per cent. of the SSEB's coal and slurry purchases were supplied by British Coal. Therefore, it is clear that the future of the coal industry in Scotland is heavily dependent upon the policies and decisions of the SSEB in relation to electricity generation. Of particular importance is the impending commissioning of the new nuclear power station at Torness which will increase the degree of over-capacity in the SSEB generation system. It will therefore displace coalburn and decrease coal purchases, which means a decrease in jobs. The SSEB's requirements are estimated to be between 3 million and 4 million tonnes a year. Reduced purchases would be a serious blow to the Scottish coal industry.

In 1983-84, the SSEB bought about 5 million tonnes of coal slurry from British Coal. In 1985-86 it bought about 7 million tonnes, but some of that was to replenish stocks. The SSEB recently agreed to buy only 3·6 million tonnes in 1986-87. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West talked of the generating capacity in the SSEB. Its characteristics in terms of plant by type can be described as follows: Longannet, coal; Cockenzie, coal; Kincardine, coal; Methil, slurry; Inverkip, which the SSEB proposes to close, oil; Hunterston A and B, nuclear—one Magnox and one AGR. We also have hydro-electric and gas turbines. We have installed capacity of 7,870 MW, but that works out at about 6,160 MW.

The electricity supplied during 1985-86 was considerably below capacity. There is substantial overcapacity. The system load factor for the year was about 56 per cent., while the system maximum demand recorded on 7 January 1986 was 4,237 MW, or 69 per cent. of potential generation. Available capacity exceeds system maximum demand by 47 per cent. With a safety margin of 28 per

cent., which is standard, maximum continuous capacity exceeds system maximum demand by 15 per cent. excluding the 1,284 MW in rotational storage at Inverkip.

The SSEB bought 8·7 million tonnes of coal in 1980-81, 7·78 million tonnes in 1981-82, 6·25 million tonnes in 1982-83, 4·95 million tonnes in 1983-84—I shall not give the figure for 1984-85 as it was the year of the strike—and 7·48 million tonnes in 1985-86, which is high because of replenishing stocks.

The Scottish coal industry is heavily dependent on one customer—electricity generation. It bought two thirds of British Coal output in Scotland last year. The Scottish electricity generation system, however, has substantial overcapacity. Commissioning the new AGR plant at Torness will increase capacity in the south of Scotland electricity system by more than 20 per cent. If commissioned, Torness will be used for baseload generation and could produce electricity equivalent to about 4 million tonnes of coal. Its impact on coalburn will depend on the amount of use made by the SSEB of its capacity and the amount of electricity generated for export to the CEGB.

It has been pointed out in the debate that following the Chernybol accident there have been significant pressures on the whole nuclear power programme and on the commissioning of Torness. In considering the environment, we must be aware of certain dangers. One is the risk of a major accident at a nuclear power station, and Chernobyl gave a chilling glimpse of what such an accident can involve. About 50,000 people had to be evacuated from a 19-mile zone around the Chernobyl plant, the radiation was so intense as to be lethal in two hours and many square miles of Soviet earth are now poisoned by radioactive isotopes and will pose a threat to human life for many decades to come.

We must also consider what has happened in other countries. The right hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) and I visited Norway about a year ago. We learned there that the reindeer herds in the north had to be slaughtered because of radiation. There are great dangers involved in disposing of nuclear waste, which is an unavoidable by-product of the nuclear industry. The problem of its disposal and the dangers of pollution have yet to be dealt with satisfactorily by any country.

Apart from the public response in this country to what happened in Chernobyl, consider what has happened elsewhere. Yugoslavia has cancelled plans for a second reactor; orders in Belgium and the Netherlands have been delayed; Italy's only new reactor project has been halted by the local council; Austria is dismantling a reactor unused; Finland has suspended a decision to build another reactor; Sweden, where nuclear equals about 50 per cent. of electricity generation, plans to phase out nuclear power in under 25 years; and while nuclear power in the United States is planned to increase by 40 per cent. in the next few years, that will come from reactors which were started 15 years ago, there have been no new orders since 1978 and there are no plans for new orders in the foreseeable future. My view, therefore, is that no more civil nuclear power stations should be built and that we should make a start on phasing out the existing ones.

Two measures would provide help to the Scottish coal industry—a moratorium on the use of oil for electricity generation, and the full use of the transmission link for the export of electricity to the CEGB. Any short-term increase in generation costs could be justified, bearing in mind the potential long-run economic and social costs of the loss of deep-mined capacity.

We have in Britain 11 first generation Magnox stations, 10 of which have been operating for 20 years. It was intended that a safety review should be carried out prior to them being permitted to continue beyond that period. Only one such review, relating to Calder Hall, has been published. We have five second generation stations, AGRs, and a further two are under construction. One is Torness, and, based on what we know, it should not be commissioned. In terms of energy demand, we do not need it. There should be more public evidence about whether it could be converted to coal. The commissioning of Torness would have a devastating effect on the coal industry.

Chernobyl illustrated that nuclear power is unforgiving and dangerous. That is the main reason why Torness should be halted and why we should phase out nuclear power.

12.59 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I join the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) and should like to express the thanks of the House for the perceptive and knowledgeable way in which he introduced this useful debate on an important subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) spoke with an expert knowledge on the subject, born of many years of long experience. My hon. Friends the Members for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), who has a great constituency interest in this matter, made helpful contributions. My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who takes a great interest in these matters and in whose constituency are the headquarters of the National Nuclear Corporation, and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) were present throughout the debate.

I regret that, apart from the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie), we have not had the benefit of any Labour Members in the Chamber throughout the debate. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has given the benefit of his baleful sincerity in our proceedings and the unanimity of the alliance has been greatly helped by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) absenting himself shortly after we began.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West mentioned Torness. I should like to reassure him that modifications to some of the control rods at Torness have been carried out, and it is hoped that that will solve the problem. Rigorous tests on the modifications will be carried out under nuclear installations inspectorate supervision before fuel loading proceeds. I understand that the South of Scotland Electricity Board hopes to commission reactor 1 in the autumn of this year, with reactor 2 coming on stream next year. I reassure my hon. Friend that there is no possibility of commissioning Torness until the nuclear installations inspectorate is fully satisfied that all safety requirements have been met.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West that the Government and the energy industries are fully conscious of the vital importance of safety. The nuclear power industry's record on both site and environmental safety is nothing short of excellent.

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

There have been only 10 accidents, each resulting in a single death, in the nuclear power industry in the 10 years to February this year and none of those involved radiation.

My hon. Friend is right in saying that radioactive emissions from coal-fired power stations are considerably higher than those from nuclear stations. The collective permitted dose equivalent is about 5 man Sieverts per GW year of electricity generated from coal-fired power stations and for nuclear stations it is less than 2 man Sieverts. It should be stressed that the average annual individual dose from the normal operation of coal-fired stations is less than half the dose that a person would receive from cosmic rays during a holiday flight to Spain.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): That is another reason for not going to Spain.

Mr. Goodlad: Or, indeed, to anywhere else involving a similar flight length.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West mentioned the accident at Chernobyl. It was the result of repeated deliberate non-compliance with the safety procedures by the operators. Sir Frank Layfield in his report on Sizewell noted that the CEGB had a good record in selecting and training staff and had the resources and commitment to deal with human aspects of operating stations. He also praised the technical competence of the nuclear installations inspectorate. The Soviet leadership has recognised that openness and accountability are fundamental to the efficient and proper management of its industries.

It is said that the chief motive of the staff was to complete their tests as expeditiously as possible. The failure to adhere to instructions when preparing to carry out the tests, the non-compliance with the testing programme and carelessness in handling the reactor facility were evidence that the staff were insufficiently familiar with the specialist features and technological processes of a nuclear reactor. They had lost any feelings for the hazards involved.

It is also said that the designers of the reactor facility did not provide for protective safety systems capable of preventing an accident in the combination of circumstances prevailing in unit 4 at Chernobyl. Those circumstances involved the deliberate switching off of technical protection systems coupled with violations of the operating regulations. They considered that the conjunction of events that caused the accident to be impossible. Thus, the prime cause of the accident was the extremely improbable violation of instructions and operating rules committed by the staff of the unit.

There is a stark contrast between that and Sir Frank Layfield's high opinion of the CEGB and the nuclear installations inspectorate's technical and engineering competence. It is also in contrast to the paramount commitment that the generating board and the inspectorate have given to safety and their excellent safety records.

The National Radiological Protection Board has published today its first assessment, under an EC contract, of the effects of Chernobyl on Europe. It puts the accident into a helpful perspective. On average, the extra radiation received was 16 per cent. of that which we receive from natural background sources and about the same as the dose that is received from cosmic rays during a return flight to New York. Because of the restrictions on contaminated food, the effects of that extra radiation of 16 per cent. were greatly reduced. Over the next 50 years, some 30 million people in Europe are expected to die from "natural" cancers. The "extra" cancers due to Chernobyl are predicted to be about 1,000. Thus, there will be one additional Chernobyl cancer for each 30,000 "natural" cancers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West rightly emphasised the worries that people have about the environmental effects. I reiterate that the study by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, published yesterday, although in the Library of the House for some time, found no indication of any abnormal pattern of leukaemias around CEGB nuclear installations. Therefore, no causal connection has been found between leukaemia and radiation from nuclear installations.

We are all exposed to natural radiation from many sources. Natural sources account for about 87 per cent. of the radiation dose to the population of the United Kingdom. The remainder is due to medical exposure such as the effect of X-rays. Discharges from the nuclear industry account for 0·1 per cent.—that is, one part in a thousand — of the radiation that is received by the British population. That study has been referred to the independent Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment for advice on the implications of the report and the need for any further work.

My hon. Friend referred to the greenhouse effect; that is a major topic of international research, and the United Kingdom is participating in that research. The evidence suggests that the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is rising slowly, with an increase of 25 per cent. since 1800. The average atmospheric temperature has increased by between 0·5 deg C and 10 deg C over the same period. Fossil fuel burning and deforestation affect the atmospheric carbon dioxide content, although there are many other important factors.

It is too early to predict, with any confidence, what the long-term effect is likely to be on the world climate and environment. Any changes are likely to occur slowly, over many decades. We can be certain, however, that nuclear power stations do not emit carbon dioxide. Increased nuclear capacity can therefore help to contain the level of carbon dioxide emissions that are attributable to electricity generation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West referred to employment implications. The jobs of about 150,000 depend directly or indirectly on the continuation of our nuclear industry. New nuclear stations will cheapen our electricity supplies, and about 800,000 people work in industries whose competitiveness depends on cheap electricity. Closing our existing nuclear stations prematurely and not replacing them would put many of those jobs at risk.

Time, alas does not allow a full deployment of the reasons why Her Majesty's Government have taken the decision that the Sizewell power station——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I hope that the Minister will conclude his reply in one sentence. The time for the debate is about to elapse.

Mr. Goodlad: Perhaps I should say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are convinced that nuclear power is the

safest, cleanest and cheapest form of generation. We think that the parties who have abrogated their responsibility to future generations by forswearing its benefits to Britain, Europe and the world are betraying a great trust.

Research Councils

1.11 am

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The Consolidated Fund debate comes at a time that is most opportune for considering what must surely be one of the most important purposes for which it is used — the funding of Britain's research and development.

The funding of the research councils is in jeopardy. It is an appalling indictment of the Government's mismanagement that after a give-away Budget the research councils are virtually having to suspend all new grants for scientific research at a time of unprecedented fertility in the applications of new science.

There are three decision processes that have created the present crisis. The first process is financial management within the current year. The second is the general level of research council funding in relation to other countries. The third is the funding of research and development by Government and industry and the effectiveness of its application.

The Government have muddled all three processes. Thus, when the Prime Minister was asked last Thursday during Prime Minister's Question Time about the Science and Engineering Research Council freeze she replied in terms of the overall level of Government funding of civil research and development as a proportion of national income, as if the research councils were free to juggle their own resources.

When the academic salary increases were agreed by the Government, they made at least some money available to universities to meet the cost of them. Universities can borrow money and carry funds over from one year to another, but research councils cannot do so, yet the Government made no extra money available to the councils for the salary increases that they had no part in deciding. The Government must now make available to the research councils the money that is needed in the current financial year and in 1987-88, or the councils will have no alternative but to award virtually no new research grants for the next six months, and the effect will carry on over into next year.

Starting in October, the Medical Research Council will have to cut the new awards that it makes from the expected 500 to probably about 190. The Science and Engineering Research Council has had a substantial increase in its funding this year. Most of the increases went on the Cray computer at the Rutherford Appleton laboratory, for which the Government had deliberately made specific provision, and also on the increase in the CERN subscription due to the depreciation of sterling. The increase in the CERN subscription swallowed up almost all the Government's provision above previous plans that was announced last November.

What was the Science and Engineering Research Council expected to do? Should it have given notice that it would leave CERN in January 1988, while the European inquiry, set up by the Secretary of State's own initiative, was still in train? That would have destroyed Britain's acceptability as a research partner in increasingly important international collaborative programmes.

The areas that the Science and Engineering Research Council has been able to exempt amount to only 20 per cent. of the grant expenditure that it expected to incur in its third grant round this year. The research councils had

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

made provision for salary increases, but had they provided anything like the 24 per cent. agreed by the Government, the Department of Education and Science and the Treasury would have been the first to stop them. There was no way in which responsible financial management in the research councils could have protected them from the drastic steps that they now have to take.

If the Secretary of State cannot find the money straight away, the heads of the research councils should go, as is their right, to the Prime Minister. They will find that they will first have to educate her, as she is working with quite out-of-date figures. The comparison that she makes is expenditure as a proportion of national output. The latest OECD figures for civil research and development are for 1984 or 1985. The specially collected figures for academic and academically related research in the Advisory Board on Research Councils' science policy study 2 (table 40), conducted by Irvine and Martin for the ABRC, go back as far as 1982. Even then the United Kingdom was well behind France and Germany, but it was well ahead in Government-funded civil research and development as a proportion of national output. It was ahead of Japan and the United States.

The private sector and industry in the United States, Germany and Japan funded, and still fund vastly more research and development than the private sector and industry do in this country. In more recent years since 1982, which is the latest year for which we have systematic data, both the United States and Japan have been taking steps greatly to increase Government funding of civil research and development, and we feel the effect of that in the brain drain today.

The budgetary process in the United States is no model for government anywhere, but federal funding for basic science in universities and colleges in the United States increased by 30 per cent. in real terms in the first four years of President Reagan's Administration, although the Carter energy programmes in the industry were cut. When I quoted that figure of 30 per cent. in real terms in the first four years of the Carter Administration in a debate, the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph), the present Secretary of State's predecessor, did not believe it. He thought that it must be in money terms. In fact, the figure was supplied by the President's scientific adviser and confirmed to me by him.

Since 1984, federal funding of basic science in the United States has continued to increase. The National Institute of Health budget for last year has been increased by 17 per cent. this year. The President tried to cut the increase in January, but he has now backed down. Earlier this month the National Institute of Health was told by the Administration to spend the full $6·2 billion appropriated by Congress for 1987.

There is great concern in the United States about industrial competitiveness, just as there is great concern in this country on the part of everyone but, apparently, the Government. The President has sent a competiveness Bill to Congress. It calls, among other things, for a doubling of the National Science Foundation's budget over the next five years, bringing the NSF total to $3·2 billion in 1992. Congress has given the President a rough ride on defence research and development, but it is likely to give him all that he asks for, and more, for civil research and development.

Those two increases alone—the National Institute of Health increase, which has already occurred, and the National Science Foundation increase, which is planned—are putting the United States way ahead of us in the federal funding of basic science as a proportion of national product, whatever happens to the NASA and energy research budgets. And that is on top of the huge increases in private research funding in the United States.

For example, last year the University of Texas at Austin created 24 new chairs in computer science alone. A $24 million increase in oil royalties was matched by $24 million of private donations. The oil royalties disappeared because of the fall in the price of oil, but another $24 million was raised privately to make good the deficit, and the endowment went ahead. Stanford university is embarking on a new endowment appeal which can only be compared with the total of the United Kingdom's science budget. It is such positive action in the United States, contrasted with the negative attitude of the British Government, that has set the brain drain running again at full bore.

While Japan's formidable industry-funded civil research and development forges ahead—now at 2·8 per cent of its national product, compared with our 0·8 per cent. — talk of increasing its Government funding of basic research is gathering the momentum that we should have learnt to respect by now when Japan talks about its science and technology plans. Even in the particular areas where Japan has concentrated, such as physics, I found it quite impossible last week to persuade the Science and Engineering Research Council physicists at Daresbury that total Japanese funding for basic science was smaller than ours as a proportion of national product. They did not believe it. Certainly it will not remain so for long.

What, then, are we to do? Are we to wring our hands, pathetically deploring the fact that British industry is backward in research and development, without noticing that Britain is the only industrial country without serious fiscal incentives to increase research and development? Should we cut our basic science, just when the links between basic science and its industrial application are becoming closer than ever?

The Minister will have read in *The Times* the account of the extraordinary meeting last week of the American Physical Society at which a flood of discoveries were announced relating to materials that remain superconductive at temperatures that are far and above absolute zero, challenging established theories and promising to transform both electronics and power engineering. The Minister will also have read today in *The Times* that the funding requests of just two of the British groups that are working in this area will exhaust the very limited funds that the Science and Engineering Research Council has been able to reserve for new work of commanding promise.

The Times may be trying to buy its way back to respectability by its new-found science and technology coverage and its advocacy of a serious national strategy for research and development. But it is accurate coverage and sound policy, and I, for one, would say good luck to it. The rest of the media will catch on soon enough.

It was because of the sheer frustration of the scientific community with the bigotry, barbarism and blindness of the Government's neglect of science and technology that *Nature*, the leading international weekly journal of science, has taken the unprecedented step of asking me to outline Labour party policy on science at a specially convened

forum that it is arranging on Thursday. Apart from the Government, there is a general consensus in Britain on the need for increased support for research and development. Labour policies are a part of that consensus. What I say will be as much a manifesto for science as a manifesto for Labour. There will be nothing particularly partisan in it. What I find extraordinary is that the Government exclude themselves from that consensus. That could be one of the factors that expose the hollowness of the Government's claims to a further term of office.

Lest the Minister chides me with not having thought about or dealt with the economic problem of finding the resources that must be invested in research and development, let me deal specifically with aspects of the research council's work which bear directly on this matter. Since 1971 the Economic and Social Research Council has been funding a research programme which I founded at that time with Lord Peston and Professor John Westcott, who is now a fellow of the Royal Society, on the use of policy optimisation on national economy models. The computer programmes that were produced by that team —which is still at work—are now used on all the main national economy models, including that in the Treasury. It provides the analysis needed to pursue a balanced combination of intermediate targets such as exchange rate stabilisation and final targets, such as stable prices and low unemployment. With help from the Treasury, the ITEM club and the team at Imperial college, I now have those programmes running on a souped-up micro computer on my desk. Incidentally, they are running faster than they do on the Treasury and Imperial college mainframes. If any Minister or official would like to bring along their data I shall be glad to work out with them how the modest increased resources needed for science and technology can be found and what the benefits would have to be from finding them.

Secondly, to go into the economic effects of technological change requires linking micro-economic and macro-economic analysis, setting the firm in the context of its industry and the economy generally. A consortium of the Treasury, the Bank of England and the Economic and Social Research Council is now seeking applications for developing the necessary system. The resources needed are modest, but the work that can be done is limited without the Government updating their rapidly degenerating statistical and management machine, which they have been deliberately dismantling. The rottenness of the Government's management goes deep.

Thirdly, the Government have received an important report from their own Advisory Council on Applied Research and Development on exploitable areas of science, which was prepared under the chairmanship of Dr. Charles Reece, the research director of ICI. This report reached what is for Britain the revolutionary conclusion that research can be organised to deliver an economic return. Instead of funding the necessary further and continuing study, the Government are relying on industry to fund that work. Of course, the money is not forthcoming. Why should industry work out for the Government how they should spend their research and development money when it has such strong proof that the Government are not taking a blind bit of notice of advice on science?

Fourthly, the Government will soon be looking for industry support for the research and development programme proposed by the IT86 committee in the crucial field of information technology. They will look in vain. The Government have not put in the strategic thinking that is needed, nor are they prepared to put up the money that our industrial competitors overseas are providing. Instead, the Minister of State is leading a yah-boo gang going around Europe rubbishing the serious work that is needed in European collaboration in the framework programme in this and other important sectors of research.

On technical change itself, the Economic and Social Research Council has cut off what should be on of our primary think tanks in the Technical Change Centre. Part of the difficulty there is pressure on funding and part the absence of any shadow of interest by Ministers, who seem to believe that the market will provide and that they do not need to bother about the impact of technical change upon society. That is fundamentalism that puts religious believers quite to shame. The Technical Change Centre is well worth rescuing in a field in which we need all the help that we can get.

Far more is needed in an effective research and development strategy than adequate funding of the research councils. But without that, the strategy will lack a prime source of energy. The Government's present vandalism in cutting new research council funding not only misses the opportunity to rebuild our technological competitiveness, but threatens to destroy that most precious asset, our scientific tradition, which is seeking a warmer climate elsewhere.

I beg the Minister, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister to think again before it is too late. Let the research councils carry on at their previously planned real-term research funding levels for 1987 to 1988 while wider plans are made for the future. It is on those plans that the wider technological competitiveness of Britain will be restored.

1.32 am

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): I find it intriguing that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) should speak specifically about the United States, and particularly about my old university of Stanford, and about Japan which are successful private enterprise eonomies. It is unfortunate that this important debate is occurring at this hour, but it may be regarded as significant.

I welcome to the debate the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). I regret that I did not hear his maiden speech yesterday, but I look forward to his intervention in this debate. Although I do not agree entirely with the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, for whom we all have great respect he has drawn to the attention of the House a major problem — the manner in which we finance research, especially scientific research. I have often emphasised this problem before in the House, and I do so again.

In my period in the wilderness last year, I drew attention to the brain drain in an article in the *Daily Mail*. The current problem is that, although we have rightly increased university teachers' salaries at a cost of £167 million, there has been no corresponding increase in the research budget. There has been an increase, but not on that scale.

It is evident that the shortfall in the research budget must be met. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will press this most vigorously upon the Chancellor of the

[Mr. Robert Rhodes James]

Exchequer and, indeed, upon the Prime Minister, who is, after all, a fellow of the Royal Society. I make no criticism whatever of Ministers, especially Ministers in the Department of Education and Science. They have made a genuine and enlightened attempt to resolve a very real problem. Perhaps unwittingly, all of us have created another problem, and that is the one that we have to resolve.

One of my key concerns is capital funding. I am worried about current funding but even more worried about capital funding. We have to ask ourselves a key question and we must ask it of the nation. Are we in the first division in science and technology and development—too often neglected—or are we not? If the answer is yes, we have to find the means to remain in that division. If we respond to that, we then must ask ourselves what other priorities have to be pushed aside. In the short term we must bridge the gap that has emerged.

We must have a strategic long-term policy. I hope that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, for whom I have great admiration and support, will not regard my remarks as being in any way unhelpful or critical. I fully appreciate the problems and priorities that he faces. I do not altogether denigrate or criticise his remarks, but obviously there has to be a balance. The Government's achievement in higher education is remarkable, but there is still a shortfall and an immediate problem that I hope my hon. Friend will do all that he can to meet. When we have resolved that, we can then solve the strategic problems.

1.36 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I must start in this debate with a general look into research in this country, before turning to the specific problems of the research councils. Certain things stand out. One is that, while it is true that in this country some 50 per cent. of research spending goes on defence, in France it is only one third, in West Germany it is less than 10 per cent., and in Japan it is a minuscule 2·5 per cent.

It is sad to reflect on the difficulties that that great imbalance in the direction of research causes for us in this country, but there has also been a decline in our research compared with that of our neighbours. By 1989, according to *The Independent* newspaper, the national rate of Government spending on development and research will be down by a full 17 per cent. on six years earlier in real terms.

Of course, the Prime Minister promised to keep support for science research in line with inflation. Indeed, science research, running at about £600 million, has probably kept pace, broadly speaking, with real costs. At the same time, our competitors, the United States, Japan and France, have been increasing spending on those areas. We are the only major OECD country that, taking Government and industrial research and development spending together, has actually seen a decline in recent years in such spending.

In civil research we simply do not compare favourably. It is true that the Government have used as a defence the fact that the United States has, excluding defence, a civil research budget of about 1·5 per cent. of GNP—very similar to ourselves. But the nature of research in the United States is very different. In particular, the non-civil research is much more openly used later on for industrial development and is much more freely created, rather than as it is here, under the rather tired and restrictive control of the Ministry of Defence.

As the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) pointed out, the US National Science Foundation budget is set to double over the next five years. General research and development funding in the United States will be running far ahead of our own in terms of GNP. We still find that British research is underpaid, with the resulting and terrifying exodus of talent from this country. The hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) asked whether we would still be in the first division—and if we wanted to be in the first division—in research. *The Independent* said in a recent editorial:

> "One of the definitions of an underdeveloped country is that is exports its raw materials to more advanced nations. Britain's most precious raw material—the brainpower of her top scientists and engineers—is now being drained abroad, mainly to the United States . . . In all, about 1,000 British scientists and engineers settle permanently in the US each year, as many as from all other Western European countries put together."

The recent 24 per cent. pay increase is undoubtedly desirable, and a move in the right direction. No one denies that; indeed, it is a recognition of the problem we face. Sadly, it will be only partly effective, because it is still not adequate. Let us compare it with the rate in the United States. An academic researcher, fresh from his post-doctorate degree, gets some $21,000 to $25,000. Here, even after the increase, the mean level is only £9,000 to £10,000. That is an enormous difference. As a result, it is becoming hard to recruit, particularly in electronics, associated with computers and information technology, and in biology, associated with biotechnology. It is simply hard to fill posts.

The settlement will also be ineffective because the problem is not only pay but security. Most researchers are employed by the research councils on temporary, short-term contracts. The problem concerns also facilities and continuity within research, and policy on research. Research councils employ some 13,000 staff, mostly on short-term contracts—a quarter of all those involved in research—and by their nature research council grants are restricted and uncertain.

Where do we stand? Funding is restricted and there is an exodus. One reason is pay, and I accept that the Government have recognised this and acted. The paradox of the present difficulties of research councils is that, while action is being taken on one problem—pay—the other side of the coin is made worse. Restrictions and uncertainties have increased because insufficient allowance has been made for pay.

The Association of University Teachers has estimated that 60 per cent. of research contracts come up for renewal in any one year, and that is causing fear because, as the freeze intensifies, research councils, often built up over many years, and in the case of the Science and Engineering Research Council, built up with difficulty into a large team, simply do not know whether they will be able to stay together either this year or in future years. Those problems are caused because the Government have agreed a pay rise of 20 per cent., with 16 per cent. this year, but only a 2·5 per cent. increase for the research councils to pay for it. That must be a devastating blow.

The SERC, by far the largest research council, leads the way in the problem, with a shortfall of £8 million. But that is not all. This year's SERC shortfall of £8 million will be

£10 million next year. On top of that, in the central non-university facilities provided by the SERC and generally staffed by civil servants, the problem will be taken further, because the Civil Service pay rise looks like being ahead of that 2·5 per cent.—about 4·5 per cent.—and that for scientists will be higher still, approaching 10 per cent. If that comes about, there will be an extra problem of finding a further £1 million to £1·5 million for the SERC. The research councils did not negotiate these increases, the Government did, but it is the research councils and their research that are being hit.

The Government have recognised the difficulties of the universities and have given extra money to cover the pay rises, but have neglected the research councils, and not just the SERC. The Medical Research Council has a shortfall of more than £4 million. The director of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund has described this as outrageous. The Agricultural and Food Research Council see a shortfall of £4 million. The National Environmental Research Council sees a shortfall of £500,000, and I could go on.

It would be easy enough for me, as the hon. Member for Motherwell, South did, simply to attack the Government and the Secretary of State for deliberately running down research and of hiding behind the overall figures the fact that pay increases are being bought at the expense of continued research, and so exacerbating the tendency for scientists to look abroad to seek greater and more constructive support.

I believe strongly that there is room to make such criticism. The problems of the universities more generally are a testament to that. But this case, I believe that there is no delberate intention to neglect research. On the contrary, I believe that the Secretary of State is more sensible and realistic than to mortgage the nation's future by deliberately cutting research. Rather, I believe—it is a suspicion that I know is shared by other hon. Members—that it was a mistake, an oversight. I believe that the Government are having to cover their embarrassment at having forgotten that that pay rise would affect the research councils as well as the universities. That is the only explanation I can give for the different treatment that has been offered. I hope that the Government will not stand on their pride in this matter. I hope that they will admit that a mistake has been made and that when the University Grants Committee, was given the money to cover the new wage costs, finance——

Dr. Bray: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene in the first speech that I have heard him make in the House; I hope that it will be the first of many. I do not think that his charitable explanation could stand examination, because many people pointed out during the negotiations precisely what the effect would be upon the research councils and spelt out, million for million, the action required, which the Government totally failed to take.

Mr. Taylor: I can only hope that that is not true. I still feel—it is certainly the feeling that the AUT had when I spoke to its members earlier on—that it may well have been simply a misunderstanding, an oversight. If it was, we can hope that the Secretary of State and the Minister will realise and acknowledge the mistake and take appropriate action. If that is not the case, it does not change the argument. That action must be taken to save the research base of Britain.

When the UGC was given the money to cover the new wage costs, the finance should have been given to the research councils as well for they are an essential plank, many would say the essential plank, in building the investment and the new ideas and technologies that Britain needs for the future. I draw attention to the alliance's yellow book, "The Time has Come" which spoke of the problems caused not only by pay but by

"The frustration caused by arbitrary cuts in research funds."

We could have no better example of arbitrary cuts than the current freeze that has been forced on the research councils.

Arbitrary cuts are now being brought in with a vengeance. However, there is time to correct this. In a week when hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent on tax cuts and on keeping down the price of drink and tobacco, the funds, perhaps £15 million, to at least keep research on an even keel, are clearly there. The Secretary of State for Education and Science and his colleagues should, at the very least, admit that oversight and make this small payment.

1.48 am

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): It is a pleasure to hear the new hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) make his second speech. I am sorry that I missed his maiden speech. He will know that the second speech and the third, fourth, fifth and all those after that will not be treated in the same generous way as his maiden speech was undoubtedly treated. However, I am pleased to hear him make a contribution to a scientific debate. The more hon. Members who take an interest in the science activity of Britain and theVote of money we put to it, the better.

I would give the hon. Gentleman only a word of warning, as one who has been here a long time. He sits in a place often occupied by his hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who has spoken on many subjects—almost too many—and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that as a warning to be himself and not anyone else in his party, as I am sure he will.

I should declare my interest. As the House knows, I am a member of the Medical Research Council. I want to follow the point that has been raised by the hon. Member for Truro about the funding of the academic pay rise that affects those who work in the research councils.

If I dare, I should like to quote from an article that I have spotted in the small hours of this morning in what I think that I am correct to call tomorrow's *Financial Times*, of 25 March. There is a long article by David Fishlock on the activities and work initiated by the Medical Research Council into AIDS research. The author refers to the AIDS research programme of £14·5 million over three years, which will not be affected by any changes that may be precipitated by the need to find more money to pay the new academic salaries that are required as a result of the Government's decision. He rightly states that that is a directed research programme.

It is rather novel in academic research to seek to programme research with a clear objective. That means channelling resources into the directions that show the most promise. Academics and researchers sometimes say that that is dangerous because one cannot always be sure what will show the most promise. I refer to that at this

[Mr. David Crouch]

stage too because I wish to quote a telling and important point made by David Fishlock, who wrote that the real task for our medical researchers is

"whether they can define a strategic role for British science in a huge international effort."

That is a reference to the task facing medical researchers in the AIDS international research programme. The Medical Research Council, our universities and British research activity are faced with finding a solution to one of the major problems facing medical science today. Anything that diminishes activity in that area would be a tragedy. I have already said that any decision that must be made in the research councils, and especially in the Medical Research Council, must not diminish the research activity to which we are directing our attention for finding a cure and a vaccine for AIDS.

Today, the Medical Research Council is facing a new financial crisis, which is directly caused by the restructuring of non-clinical academic pay scales that came out earlier this month. As the hon. Member for Truro has said, the universities are to receive an additional 6 per cent. in 1987-88, rising to 10 per cent. in 1989-90 to meet those extra costs. In real terms, that represents an additional £40 million in 1987-88, £56 million in 1988-89 and an extra £71 million in 1989-90. That will provide average pay increases of 24 per cent., of which 16·6 per cent. will be backdated to December 1986 and 7·4 per cent. will be paid from 1 March 1988.

In a written answer, the Secretary of State said:

"I welcome this settlement. It will reward excellence, enable substantially higher salaries to be paid to a minority of outstanding professors and help to counter the brain drain."—[*Official Report*, 5 March 1987; Vol. 111, c. 672.]

That is an excellent decision, which is excellent news for all of us, and I commend and welcome it.

The Medical Research Council scientists, working in their own units, are paid on the university scale, as are the university staff who are paid from the Medical Research Council current grants. They are all involved in this academic pay award.

The cost to the MRC of this excellent decision is £6 million in the first year. The MRC has been allowed a cash limit for such pay increases of no more than 2·5 per cent. which provides £1·8 million towards that £6 million. Both the MRC and the universities must pay the increased academic salaries. Therefore, the MRC is short of £4·2 million for this year and has been able to provide only £1·8 million from the 2·5 per cent. cash limit. Next year, 1988-89, the MRC will have to find no less than £5·2 million in addition to meet the higher salary scales to be paid. The total for research councils may be more than £15 million and even as much as £20 million.

The Secretary of State provided an extra £40 million for the universities but nothing extra for the research councils. Did the Secretary of State nod? I cannot believe that it was intended to exclude the same people from this proper award which was made after considerable discussion. Nor can I believe that the Secretary of State meant to ask the research councils to reduce their research programmes to pay for these higher salaries.

The new salaries are necessary and long overdue. Last month, before the announcement, I protested at a research council meeting at the salary scales to be paid from 1 April. A professor's salary ranges from £19,010 to a maximum of £24,877. That is a ludicrous salary for someone with experience in industry—and I am not talking about the big bang in the City. No wonder there is a brain drain and no wonder I welcomed the announcement a few weeks ago that the pay scales would be increased substantially. I would have liked to see them increased further, because we should keep our scientists at work in this country and equip them for their valuable work.

If the Secretary of State intends the research councils to find the money from their own resources, the MRC will have to reduce its scientific effort, not on AIDS, because that is sacrosanct and will go ahead, but on research, when everybody knows that we should be increasing expenditure. If the axe must fall, and I hope it will not in the MRC it will fall, not on existing programmes because we cannot do that, but on new project grants under the project grant mechanism.

I agree with the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, who has received the same advice as I have from the MRC, that we in the MRC will be forced to stop all new project grants from this moment until July. From July onwards when we consider the period from October 1987 to October 1988, we shall have to reduce project grants unless we receive additional funds. Normally we would fund 500 such grants, but they will have to be reduced to fewer than 200—probably 190.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the term "new projects" is misleading, because many of those projects will involve current research teams entering new phases of work that require new funding? Therefore, current projects in progress may indeed be affected.

Mr. Crouch: Yes, to a certain extent I agree that that is true.

The Medical Research Council will not cut work in its own units or existing programme grants, but it will be forced to cut future project grants, as I have said. That will mean that new work in the universities and medical schools which we are looking forward to will very largely cease if we cannot get the Government to recognise the seriousness of the position.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his Ministers appreciate the position. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today met the secretaries of the research councils. I know that they have not withheld their thoughts about the problems and that they have explained the difficulties. I hope that this debate will help to overcome this difficulty—which we hope will be only temporary—and that extra funding will come from the Treasury so that our research will not be impeded as I have suggested.

2.1 am

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) in congratulating the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) on bringing forward this important debate. I have agreed with many of the comments that I have heard tonight. The debate is obviously as vital to my constituents in Oxford as it is to the constituents represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James). I agreed with much that my hon. Friend said.

I want to preface my remarks with an observation that follows on from a remark made by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) about the impact of the brain drain.

In comparing salaries in this country with those in the United States, the hon. Gentleman did not perhaps do himself as much justice with his point as he could have. If he had made that comparison, he would have had to take into account the most invidious comparison of all with regard to the brain drain, which is that until the Chancellor's recent move in this budget the top rate of tax in the United States was one percentage point lower than the basic rate of tax in the United Kingdom. If anything will make potential high earners leave these shores for a more advantageous climate, it is our tax regime.

While that may apply to many in business, in the City and, I confess, would be a major consideration for me, it is the unanimous decision of the research scientists whom I have met at Oxford—to this extent I shall improve upon the point made by the hon. Member for Truro, if he will forgive me—that the continuity of funding of projects is more important than salaries. I shall consider pay in a moment, because it is obviously important, but they are vitally concerned to ensure that there is continuity of funding and that there is the ability to take on young researchers to continue programmes or to develop new programmes and avoid the uncertainty that has, regrettably, become attendant upon recent projects or new project initiatives undertaken under the aegis of the research councils and the general university research grants.

There is a point to be made about the brain drain, but ironically it does not refer to pay, nor is it, in this context, a point about tax. It concerns the fact that scientists at this level are infinitely more concerned about their work, and the continuity, integrity and continuation of that work. I am not critical of the Government's record. Spending on research has risen from about £700 million in 1978-79 to about £1·2 billion this year. Those figures are commonly accepted and show a real terms increase above the rate of inflation of about 6 per cent. The £40 million award this year will represent spending about 3 per cent. above inflation. I welcome that.

I also want to consider the three major areas of anxiety which none the less continue to exist. I refer to the funding of the pay award, the effect of cost inflation other than wages on research programmes and our industrial research and development policy.

I shall not repeat what has already been said about pay, but it is clear that the £15 million in 1978-79 and the £19 million in 1988-89 by which pay awards exceed the allocation to the research councils, even taking account of the 2·5 per cent. that is built into their new awards, have to be found by curtailing existing projects. As my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury graphically illustrated with regard to the Medical Research Council, that will have a serious effect on the initiation of new projects. The hon. Member for Truro made a fair point in his intervention in my hon. Friend's speech, that new projects, and the continuity of some existing ones, will be affected.

If that is the case, and if there is a prospect of our losing about 500 to 600 research grants in 1987-88, irrespective of whether one accepts the extraordinarily generous explanation advanced by the hon. Member for Truro, or the somewhat more cynical one, to which I found myself innately more sympathetic, that was advanced by my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, the Government have to take on board the urgent need to remedy the deficit.

I am sure that it was in the minds of those who made this decision that it is right to impose some financial discipline on research councils, but that is not realistic for next year and at such short notice.

As for cost inflation, it is no good arguing that conventional rates of inflation apply to this specialised area in which it is quite clear that prices are rising at a quite different rate. I understand that it is estimated that there will be a reduction of up to 10 per cent. between 1980 and 1990 in the volume of of science that research councils will be able to sustain if we do not take account of the faster rate of inflation for scientific equipment.

I have seen some of the answers proposed by the Science and Engineering Research Council, such as taking international subscriptions and superannuation costs out of the equation, but they are wholly artificial and conspire only to confuse the general principle, which is that different inflation rates apply to different areas of expenditure.

That occurs with regard to social services benefits. It means that if we do not fund adequately for inflation, we force organisations to cut their base level expenditure. Of course we must look for improved efficiency, but that cannot provide the whole answer.

In terms of industrial research and development, which must be a complement to Government-financed research, I have felt that we British suffered from that appalling malaise which can be summed up by saying that when we were making money we did not invest because it was not necessary, and that when we were losing money we did not invest because the money was not there to invest.

That dreadful indifference by management in the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s—I am not making a political observation; I am sure the majority of those managers would have been loyal supporters of my party—led to a condition in which British industry found it hard to accept a regular intellectual commitment to long-term research funding. As a result they have been falling behind their European and other OECD partners in the contribution that they make.

It is vital for us to give industry a longer view so that it can recognise the value of long-term investment in research and development. Possibly that could be done by the specific tax incentives for investment to which the hon. Member for Motherwell, South referred. Possibly it would be done by considering the implications for competitions policy which were raised in the BTR-Pilkington case.

In that case, one consideration was that if a company was to project long-term research commitments without any short-term pay-off it would reduce its short-term profitability and thus its attraction to investors in the short-term, despite the fact that such research might be vital to the achievement of a technical lead in an industry from the point of view of jobs, and the economy in general, in decades to come. This may mean our looking at the implications of a low tax regime to give industry the opportunity to fund investment, for without post-tax profits there can be no investment by companies in research.

The Government have done much to overcome the second industrial revolution. The first took people from the land into the factories, and the second has taken people from the factories out into the light again. If we are to keep them there, we must honour our commitment to become providers of large numbers of highly technical and skilled

[Mr. Steve Norris]

jobs, and to do that we must have a dynamic and thriving research programme in the universities and research councils.

I am pleased that the Sussex university study for ABRC showed that we spent a higher proportion of our GDP than did the United States and Japan on Government-funded academic research. That point is not stressed frequently enough, although the hon. Member for Motherwell, South referred to it. Given that greater degree of expenditure by us over some of our advanced industrial colleagues, it is clear that we cannot afford to be complacent. We in this country have the brains and skills, and we have a facility for innovation that is acknowledged to be the best in the world. With those talents, it is clear that we must, for the sake of our future as an advanced industrial nation, as much as for the intrinsic value of the research that is being conducted in universities and research councils, protect and nurture them and give them the kind of future in which we will see British science and ingenuity flourish for the benefit of us all.

2.13 am

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): It is a pleasure to speak following the thoughtful and genial speeches that have been made in the debate. The House listened with respect to the remarks of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), whose knowledge and concern for the well-being of science is widely recognised. He was not however above a few of those yah-boo touches that he discerned and deprecated in others. The air has been thick with polemic and rhodomantade and special pleading, and it was a pity that we had to suffer some further thickening of it with a few party political touches. All the same, one understands why the hon. Member for Motherwell, South felt if necessary to make those points in the way he did. We should take a cool look at the facts and a cool look at where responsibilities may properly lie. The research community itself should approve of that approach.

I think that we would all agree that the Government have a responsibility to ensure that there is an adequate programme of basic research. My hon. Friend the Minister appreciates that point and, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, has been attending to this necessity. The science budget which, through the research councils, funds the best projects, has increased by 12 per cent. more than the general rate of inflation since 1979-80. I understand that the Government intend to maintain the value of the science budget in real terms.

In the autumn statement the Government added an extra £95 million to science spending. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South referred a little disparagingly to a giveaway Budget. With the close interest that he always takes in public finances, he knows very well that the autumn statement and the spring Budget should be taken together. In fairness, he should recognise that, as part of the overall package, the Government have rightly decided to make an appreciable increase in their funding for science — a 3 per cent. real terms increase between 1986-87 and 1987-88.

The Advisory Board for the Research Councils says that an extra 10 per cent. is needed to take account of the sophistication factor — the tendency of the price of scientific equipment and materials to increase faster than the general rate of inflation. We accept that the sophistication factor is a reality. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) recognised that point rather generously, but he distinguished, rightly, between those costs that inevitably rise faster than general costs and the other costs that science has to face — of restructuring, superannuation and the hazards of the foreign exchange markets. They are common to all enterprises. It is a little specious for those who argue the case for science to brush them aside. It is a "sophistication", in a worse sense of the word, to postulate the possibility of "buying science" separately from the general cost of living. After all, the Government have to take account of general inflation. If they fail to do so in their economic policies, the environment in which science exists will deteriorate to the detriment of science.

Mr. Norris: I should like to confirm that, like my hon. Friend, I do not blame the Government in any way for having to come to terms with, for example, the impact of the exchanges in relation to external contributions. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that, faced with the unfortunate reality of the impact of the exchanges on the Budget, it is desirable that at least some way be found to anaesthetise the majority of research rather than let it be affected by a factor that is truly outside the control of those involved in that research.

Mr. Howarth: It is much to be wished that we could all be anaesthetised from adverse economic conditions. There is a dilemma. These extra costs are realities to science budgets and at the same time are realities to the Government who have a responsibility to maintain sound finance. The two imperatives drive in opposite directions, and the Government have to make an uncomfortable decision between them.

We should put pay a little more into perspective. The Science and Engineering Research Council has reacted angrily and publicly to its predicament. It has announced that it is cancelling round three of the current session as a general grants round. In the press release in which that dramatic statement was made, there was a footnote for editors pointing out that each year the SERC awards about £100 million in research grants, but the press release did not mention that the SERC's overall budget is £350 million. The £8 million shortfall was effectively presented as an 8 per cent. shortfall when, in fact, in proportion to the overall SERC budget, it was a significantly smaller figure.

I understand that the total extra pay bill for the research councils in 1987-88 will be £15 million above their budget. That budget is £660 million. A shortfall of £15 million on £660 million budget is an awkward reality, but it should be kept in perspective. It was known that pay negotiations were taking place and it may have been prudent to keep some greater margin available, notwithstanding all the difficulties. It is awkward, but I doubt that it should be presented as a catastrophe.

Dr. Bray: A margin had been kept and that margin was the maximum amount that was allowed by the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I will not dispute that point.

We should keep this issue in a slightly better perspective than the angry and passionate pleading of the research

council—although understandable—has allowed. It is frustrating for brilliant scientists in a mediocre economy—a rapidly improving economy, but one that is still inferior to those of competitor countries and at a time when there is a rapid increase in exciting areas of research that beckon and require attention, to be short of funds. However, we ought to be calm about these circumstances.

Mr. Crouch: It is not a question of the research councils being frustrated, but rather that the Government have the symmetry wrong between the university pay awards and the pay for those who work in units, in universities on research council work.

The letter that I received from the Secretary of State on 5 March on university academic pay stated:

"Today the Government accepted the proposals for the pay of academic and related staff put forward by the universities."

The Secretary of State accepted the proposal put forward by the universities, but there are those who work in the universities and who are university research granted who will not get the pay award. It is a question of a lack of symmetry not one of frustration.

Mr. Howarth: No doubt the Minister will touch on that when he replies.

There is no question of the Government being indifferent to the well being of science. I am glad that two hon. Gentlemen who have already spoken have drawn attention to the Sussex university study. The study terminated in 1982, but it showed that the Government were spending a larger proportion of gross domestic product on science than the Governments of Japan or the United States. That is a remarkable fact that will take many people by suprise and, as has been already said, it deserves to be better known.

The Government have rightly insisted on trying to ensure that there is good management in science and that there is a concentration of resources where they can be most valuably used. We cannot undertake every scientific research project that takes our fancy. We must consider what to do and we must set about doing it well. That is in the interests not just of economy, but of quality. The Government have laid stress on selectivity and on the development of centres of excellence. Inevitably when the Government adopt such a policy those who are not beneficiaries of the policy will be those whose voices we hear. It is commonplace in politics that those who do well out of public expenditure allocations.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose*—

Mr. Howarth: If the hon. Gentleman will excuse me, I shall not give way as I have only a few minutes left.

Those who do well tend to omit to say so while those who consider that they have lost out are voluble.

The people whom I meet in the academic world know very well that the Government's emphasis on quality, building on strength and selectivity is correct. It was interesting to note a letter published in *The Times* on 23 January from Mr. Crossland of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers who spoke of the problems, but certainly the problems were compounded by the excessive numbers of engineering faculties in the institutions of higher education. There are some 80; it is impossible to equip 80 faculties, and in his view there should be about 20.

The Government have a responsibility for basic research, but the costs of that can be almost infinite. We have seen that problem presenting itself with CERN, for example. There are other claims, too. The Government are having to allocate between competing claims on the public purse. There are eminently justifiable claims from the National Health Service, for example, which science exists to serve, in part. There are claims made by those who have responsibilities for the education budget. We know that the education service makes science possible at a more advanced level in our academic world. The Government have been right to lay emphasis on promoting science in our schools. They have introduced education support grants at primary level and have been criticised for so doing. That move has been described as centralisation, but if they were not actively taking steps to promote science they would be criticised. There have been extra grants for teacher training in science, TVEI, and provision has been made for computers and software programmes. There has also been the information technology initiative and the engineering and technical programme. There has been a host of other initiatives.

There are limits on what the Government can spend if they are not to wreck everything. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South seemed rather inconsistent in his remarks. He said that the American model of enlarging the public sector deficit as if there were no tomorrow was not one that we could afford to follow. Yet he said that it was terrible that the Government were not spending the money that, in his opinion, they should.

Time does not allow me to talk about the role of industry, but undoubtedly there is an important one for it to play, and the Government have been right to promote it. The Government's policy is to strengthen industry and facilitate the support that it can give to science, and that is highly relevant. I am sure we all agree there is much more that industry could do, but as we are running short of time I will make way for my hon. Friend the Minister to allow him to reply.

2.28 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): Vandalism, the yah-boo gang, rottenness, bigotry and barbarism are words and terms of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). They echo exceptionally hollowly at 2 o'clock in the morning, though they would at any time. That somewhat unscientific terminology corroded the more serious parts of his argument, especially at a time when we need some perspective in dealing with the scientific debate. Therefore, I am grateful to other hon. Members for the tone of their contributions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) made a brief, wise and thoughtful contribution to the debate, which was just the job at this time in the morning. I join those who have welcomed the new hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) to the Chamber. I am glad that he chose science as the subject for his second contribution to our debates, but my mind wandered slightly when he talked about the yellow book and I thought of Aubrey Beardsley, who used to draw in a series of disconnected dots. I am sure that that is not a source of inspiration for alliance policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) has kindly graced the Chamber with his presence. We know that he brings specialised knowledge to our debates, especially about the Medical Research Council. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr.

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Norris) has been as assiduous as ever in the interests of his constituents in science as in other issues. I was most interested in his remarks. Lastly, my hon. Friend the Member for Straford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) put matters in a rather wider perspective and helped us all by the soothing influence of his rational intellect.

As I have said, we are greatly in need of some perspective in the debate, so I shall make one or two remarks in that direction. The debate is about the funding of the research councils, and the Government have increased the science budget through which the councils are funded every year since they have been in office from £340 million in 1979-80 to £657 million in 1987-88. That is an increase in real terms of 12 per cent. These are not the actions of a Government who do not value science.

For the universities, the expenditure plans announced last November allowed for a cash increase in universities' recurrent grant of £95 million, or 7 per cent. Subsequently, the Government have announced that they will provide additional funds of £40 million in 1987-88 and, conditionally, £56 million in 1988-89 and £71 million in 1989-90 to help meet the costs of the recently announced pay settlement for university staff. This pay settlement, which amounts to 24 per cent., has wide and deep importance. The deal will give employers greater flexibility over pay. They will be able to take more account of quality of performance, special responsibilities, possession of scarce skills and difficulties of recruitment and retention in particular subjects. Our whole research effort will be strengthened through the ability to attract and retain good quality staff across a range of disciplines. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury was right to recognise the significance of the deal.

The university pay settlement will have an effect on the research councils, because their research grants to universities support a number of short-term research staff on university salary scales. But the problem must not be exaggerated. The extra cost to the research councils in 1987-88 is some £15 million out of a total budget of £657 million. To represent that as has been done outside the Chamber, but, mercifully, not here tonight, as if it will bring about the immediate collapse of British science, is absurdly to dramatise. Let me remind hon. Members that the Government will be still investing £1,300 million in the science base in 1987-88.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose——*

Mr. Walden: I shall not give way. I must plough on.

Having said that, the Government recognise that they do need to consider, with the research councils, the implication of absorbing this cost within their budgets. The head of the largest council — the Science and Engineering Research Council — met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and myself last Friday. Earlier today, we met all five heads of the research councils together so that we could further our understanding of the problems they face. The Government have taken note of what the heads of the research councils have had to say, and we shall consider most carefully.

The overriding problem that we all have to recognise is that the rapid growth of science and technology is producing many new opportunities for research at a time when the costs of undertaking that research are increasing. No country—even the wealthiest—can afford to cover the field. Increasingly, all countries are having to opt for a more selective approach in their support of research. During a recent visit to the United States, I was struck to discover that they were most interested in the work that had been done here by the University Grants Committee, the Economic and Social Research Council, and Sussex university on the assessment of the value of research. They, like us, even with a larger budget, have to pay increasing attention to priorities.

With that background, the Government have a clear and stated policy for science. Our objective is to maintain and enhance our support of the science base, to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the United Kingdom in science and technology, and to contribute to improving the competitiveness of our economy. To this end we want to get the best value out of the substantial funds available by selecting the areas to invest in, and concentrating the funds on outstanding research groups. We also want to see closer and better working relations between the science base and industry and commerce.

We also want to see more funding from private sector sources. We want to improve management, get better value for money, and to promote increased flexibility, enabling faster responses to new scientific opportunities.

I am happy tonight to have the chance to acknowledge and commend the positive and constructive way in which the scientific community has responded. Significant progress has been made on each objective—for example, the new UGC policy on selectivity, the rationalisation of sites by the research councils, the steadily growing collaboration between universities and industry, with external funding from industry rising in real terms by over 70 per cent. between 1981-82 and 1984-85, an expansion of research council contracts with the private sector, a sharpening formulation of council priorities as a basis for their published corporate plans, and new initiatives in important subject areas such as molecular medicine, opto-electronics and food science.

I make it clear at this point that, in emphasising the need to harness the science base more to promote wealth creation, the Government do not question the value of scientific inquiry for its own sake.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon stressed the importance of what the Government are doing for education. Only by having a strategy for science in schools is one able to ensure the continued excellence of British science.

There have been two major elements in this debate—the brain drain and the relationship between science and industry. As for the brain drain, it is important to remember that we are dealing not with a new problem but, with a long-standing one. It is easy to deplore the symptoms but the Government are trying to tackle the root causes. It is time that we were a trifle more honest with ourselves about what some of our scientists are going to, as well as about what the press tells us they are allegedly fleeing from.

Our scientists are going to a country that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East pointed out, has a very low tax rate, with 28 per cent. as the top rate. Yet we hear squeals of indignation from the Opposition when any move is made by the Government to reduce our extremely high taxation rate. They are going to a country where there are very close links between business and science, yet when this Government's Green Paper pointed to the need for

greater economic awareness in higher education, we were told that we are a Government of philistine materialism. They are going to a country that does not spend one sixth of its higher education funds on the most generous system of student grants in the Western world. They are going to a country where the pay and promotion arrangements are far more flexible than they are in this country. That is why we are glad about the new deal between the vice-chancellors and the Association of University Teachers.

The reforms that this Government are encouraging in higher education and science will make life more attractive, in the longer term, for science in this country. Therefore I was surprised that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South did not allude to that progress.

Industry is at the heart of the problem. Sir George Porter recognised that in a recent speech, in which he drew attention to the fact that our industrial research and development is by no means impressive. He said:

"Here we cannot blame the government because British firms received a much higher proportion of their R and D funds from the Government—30 per cent. here compared with 16 per cent. in Germany and 2 per cent. in Japan."

Sir George Porter has been known to voice a few criticisms of the Government's policy, but in that statement he displayed great seriousness and even-handedness.

What are we to do about it? It is easy to lament this major cultural shortcoming in Britain, but one must have a policy to deal with it. We are trying to change the whole climate of higher education and, to some extent, of science to make it more attractive to industrial investors. That is in the process of becoming a major achievement of this Government—and of higher education and science. We are also building incentives into our pattern of research funding, whether by means of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education, or — more significantly, perhaps — by means of the University Grants Committee, to attract more industrial funding by linking it with UGC funding. Then there is the new Link programme — a very significant development. Its objective is made clear by its name. The sum of £210 million is to be channelled in such a way as to attract the maximum amount of funding from industry. The model for that development is the very successful Alvey programme.

The latest DTI figures for the industrial funding of research and development show an improvement of 5 per cent. between 1983 and 1985. Given the increased profitability of British firms, I hope that they will take advantage of the new opportunities that are being provided by higher education and by science.

I am afraid, although this is not an occasion for party polemics, that I must draw the attention of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South to one or two facts. First, it is a matter of historical record, which should be noted, that the science budget declined between 1974 and 1979. Significantly, the biggest decline was in 1976, which was the year of the IMF. It seems that that puts the hon. Gentleman's remarks in slightly different perspective. I hope that when he talks to "Nature" he will ask its editor, Mr. John Maddox, what he meant by the phrase in his article in *The Sunday Times* that

"Morale had already slumped 10 years ago, before this Government was elected."

It is quite wrong of the hon. Gentleman not to mention the realities of the situation of which all the scientists whom I meet and talk to are aware — the need for greater concentration of effort and more dynamic promotion structures, which we have achieved in the recent pay deal in the universities. It is wrong of the hon. Gentleman not to congratulate the sector of higher education and our scientists on the progress that they are making in highly necessary reforms.

In accordance with MR. SPEAKER'S *Ruling*—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19]—*the Debate was concluded.*

Central America

2.41 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I wish to raise an important matter in tonight's Consolidated Fund debate — British Government policy towards Central America.

The matter has been raised in previous debates in the House, but it needs to be raised again because of the disturbing reports that have been received recently of British Government and British commercial complicity in the illegal sale of arms to the Contras in Nicaragua and all the horror that the sale of those arms causes.

Before turning to that matter, I want to raise some other issues of policy towards the region. What is unclear to me, and I am sure to many other people, is exactly what the British Government's policy is towards Central America. I say that with some feeling because I have examined, for example, the British Government's voting record at the United Nations since 1982. There have been 23 votes on the subjects of Central America at the United Nations since 1982. On 10 occasions the British Government have abstained. On five occasions there was no vote or unanimous decision. On five occasions they supported resolutions condemning violations of human rights in Guatemala and twice in the case of human rights in El Salvador.

On 17 December 1985, General Assembly resolution No. 40/188 regretted the imposition of a trade embargo on Nicaragua by the United States. It is a matter of great shame that that was adopted by 91 votes to 6, with 49 abstentions, one of which was, predictably, the United Kingdom.

On 31 July 1986 the Security Council draft resolution on compliance with the judgment of the International Court of Justice, on the legality, or rather the illegality, of American policy against Nicaragua was vetoed by the United States and the British Government showed true mettle on that occasion and abstained. Once again the British Government abstained on 28 October 1986 on the Security Council draft resolution on compliance with the judgment of the International Court of Justice.

One must ask: do we have a British Government policy in relation to central America, or do we have a policy which does little more than mirror whatever the American Administration want to be done? On occasions Ministers have told us that there is an independent policy. On other occasions they have told us that they suppport the Contadora policy, and on other occasions again they have said that they support the European initiatives on Central America, which, it is true, bear some resemblance to Contadora policy, but nevertheless the record of the British Government at the United Nations is not one of which they can be proud. All that they have done is to support American policy in that region.

We do not know exactly what voting goes on in the financial institutions of the world, because many such details are not published, but we have a fairly good idea that British Government policy in respect of trade credits and aid for Nicaragua is in line with the political objectives of the United States Administration.

There has been a sharp and significant fall in Government bilateral aid to Nicaragua since 1979, and there has been an increase in aid to Honduras and El Salvador. I believe that now there has been a resumption of aid to Guatemala. There has been considerable non-governmental aid to Nicaragua, some of which has been match funded by the British Government.

To have some idea of the problems in the region, it is essential for the House to have at least some knowledge of the problems faced by the area as a whole. The countries of the region — Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua — have a number of features in common. First, they are all fairly poor and, in the case of Honduras, extremely poor. Nicaragua is poor, but is trying to improve itself.

Ther economies of those countries rely heavily on agriculture and all the countries have similar experiences of high levels of infant mortality and low life expectation. A recent publication by the Catholic Institute for International Relations summarises statistics for the region and shows that in 1985 life expectancy was high in Costa Rica, at 73·1, which is more or less a European figure, and low in Guatemala, at 59. Those are official figures, but they need to be fairly closely examined and treated with some scepticism, because I think that they often understate the degree of social deprivation that exists throughout the region.

Economically, the region suffers greatly from having economies based on agriculture. They rely on world commodity prices, over which national economies have very little control. It is important to understand something of the history of the region. It gained its independence from Spain in the early 19th century and a series of republics were set up, all of which have had consistently weak Governments, and all of which have economies increasingly dominated by foreign-owned multinational companies. This has led to great rural poverty and to distortions of the economy. It has also led to enormous political influence by largely foreign-owned multinational companies. In turn, this has led to a degree of landlessness among the peasants and, quite understandably, this has led to enormous peasant protests.

There are several ways of examining the history of Central America. One is by way of a series of governmental changes, and another is by way of the onward determination of largely landless people to achieve some social justice. The process now going on in Central America must be viewed in its historical perspective.

I have visited the region on a number of occasions. In El Salvador there is a town that has no seats in the central square. That is unusual for a Spanish colonial-type town, and when I asked why there were no seats I was told that the square was the burial ground of 30,000 peasants who were murdered by the El Salvador army in 1932 as a result of the peasant uprising of that time led by Farabundo Marti. That is now the name of the liberation movement in El Salvador. Similar experiences are recorded throughout Nicaragua, where in the same period of the 1930s Augusto Sandino led a series of peasant movements.

It is against that sort of background that one has to look at the regional conflict and at the problems as a whole. My understanding of the region is that a large number of socially small people are determined to improve themselves, and that the main obstacle to their improvement is the domination of the region in the past by largely foreign-owned multinational companies and the absolute determination of successive United States Administrations to have a stranglehold on the politics and the economies of the region.

United States troops have been frequently in that region, and there are endless stories of the atrocities that have been committed by them in various peasant wars during this century. Recent conflicts have a very strong historical basis. It is awful to report that since 1978—only nine years ago—150,000 people have been killed in the civil wars in a region whose population is less than one-third that of the United Kingdom. That is why it is important that the House debates the region and understands British Government policy.

We are aware of the low level of trade between Britain and the countries of that region. There are serious questions as to British Government policy towards the region. We know their United Nations voting record, and their trade and aid policy towards Central America, but we need to know where they stand on the civil wars there.

Do they actually recognise the right of the Nicaraguan Government to their own self-determination and to decide their own future, or are they on the side of the Contras and the United States in their flat-out determination to destroy that Government? Do the British Government recognise the social process that is going on in El Salvador, or are they entirely on the side of the El Salvador army and all the horrors and atrocities that go with that? The House is entitled to know that.

There are many other issues in that region that I could mention, and I should like to go through some of them. The countries of that region, whilst treated to some extent separately in policy formation, actually hang together strongly. The key to much of American policy towards the region is its policy towards Honduras as a whole. Honduras is very much under military occupation. Anyone who has visited it will be struck by the appalling poverty of many of the peasant people and by the enormous American military presence. At any one time since 1983 there have been over 20,000 United States ground troops within Honduras.

The next exercise planned for Honduras—they have lost count of the number of Big Pine exercises and they refer to the exercises as Big Pine and nothing else—will see 50,000 United States ground troops there next summer. I quote from the Central American Historical Institute update on Honduras of 12 December 1986, which gives the flavour of the problems that the people of Honduras are suffering:

"Honduras has long been the second poorest country in the hemisphere, after Haiti. Since 1982 almost continuous U.S.-Honduran joint military maneuvers and extensive U.S. military aid have contributed to the militarization of Honduran society. In the last four years the United States has provided over $289 million in direct military aid, and over $170 million in military construction under the umbrella of the maneuvers. Proposed military assistance for 1987 includes $50 million in construction and as much as $89 million in direct aid and $90 million in Economic Support Funds. In addition, Honduras received 10 Bell-450 helicopters in September and is currently negotiating the purchase of Kfir jet-fighters with Israel."

To give a contrast to what is happening there, I quote Victor Inocencio Peralta, head of the 100,000 member National Peasants Union, who said of the Contra presence:

"Our members don't want to take any more chances of cultivating their land and then having to abandon it because of the constant abuses carried out by the contras."

On the one hand massive American aid is flowing into the country, and on the other a large number of illegal forces are determined to destroy the forces of the neighbouring country of Nicaragua and to throw Honduran peasants off their land and occupy it. I have further information in front of me from the Central American Historical Institute which gives some idea of the militarisation of Honduras. This makes strange reading when one considers it against the many statements made by the United States Administration and, on some occasions, by the British Government about the alleged dangers to security in the region of the size of the Nicaraguan army.

As I have said, the Honduras air force is extremely well equipped. Now, it has expanded even more with 12 super-Mystere jet fighters from Israel, which will mean that

"Honduras has had a more powerful air force than any of its neighbours in Central America. The Super-Mysteres are suitable for offensive raids, and were used as recently as last December 7 in attacks on the towns of Wiwili and Murra in northern Nicaragua."

There is now a massive base in Honduras that is being used to attack neighbouring countries. The Contras are using it as a base to attack Nicaragua, and the American forces are providing a base from which the El Salvadorean army can make bombing raids. If ever there was a case of the region being destabilised, it is through the policy towards Honduras, which makes it a military base, rather as Thailand was used as a military base throughout the Vietnam conflict during the 1960s.

In the case of El Salvador, the Government's policy has more published information about it for a number of reasons. A civil war has been raging there for some time, and the Duarte Government were installed by elections that many people, and many observers, believed to be fraudulent. The British Government sent observers to those elections, but pronounced them to be satisfactory—a view not shared by many others. The same British Government refused to send official observers to the elections in Nicaragua, thus prejudging the situation in the region as a whole.

In the case of El Salvador, the amount of aid received not just from the United States but from other countries is considerable. Military aid from the United States has gone up from the 1980 level of $50 million to the 1986 level of $131 million. Economic aid has also increased, and some supplementary aid has been given. We are told that in El Salvador this is matched by a general improvement in the civil and human rights position. We are told not that there is an absolute improvement, but that there has been a comparative improvement.

The history of El Salvador over the past seven years shows that while the civil war has been going on, illegal death squads have been operating in parts of the country. Thousands of people have been taken away in the middle of the night, and their bodies have been found in shallow graves in the morning. This did not stop in the year that Duarte was elected, and it has not stopped now. While the figures for illegal killings are lower than they have been over the past years, they have not finished altogether. In 1986, 1,821 people were killed, 1,000 were captured and 230 disappeared.

This is something that is well documented by many people. I shall not quote sources such as the FMLN and others, but Senator John F. Kerry, writing in "El Salvador Update: Counter Terrorism in Action", which is based on the findings of a research team in El Salvador in 1986, investigating United States assistance to the El Salvadorean police. He said:

"As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee I have repeatedly voiced my concerns that aid to foreign

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police forces cannot have a positive impact in unstable countries like El Salvador and Guatemala, where there is no functioning judicial system and law enforcement is essentially under military control. I agree with the conclusion of the Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus that 'For the future, U.S. police aid programs must be limited to police units under civilian control and linked to concrete progress in the establishement of a functioning judicial system; only such a system can hold both police and military forces accountable to it, and ultimately strengthen the rule of law in Central America.' "

The report goes on to chronicle those in detail. I am sure that the Foreign Secretary has received a copy of that report. If not, I would be only too happy to send him one.

I asked about El Salvador not just to chronicle the horrors of what life there is like for ordinary people. I have witnessed some of those horrors, such as the shanty towns in which people live, the heartbreak of disappearances, and the bravery of people who are organising human rights groups, such as the Committee of the Mothers of the Disappeared or the various trade unions activists and the horrors through which they have gone. In addition to that, there were the effects of the earthquake last year and the undoubted corruption in the distribution of aid that was given to El Salvador to deal with that earthquake.

In the midst of all that, the British Government say that the human rights position in El Salvador is improving; yet there are several thousand known political prisoners in gaols, never mind those who have disappeared. In addition to offering bilateral aid to the El Salvadorean Government, the British Government are also undertaking the training of one El Salvadorean officer at the British military academy. The Minister told us on one occasion that that young man was here to learn the democratic ways of the British and to learn about parliamentary Government in this country. He might be a particularly remarkable young man who will learn a great deal while he is here, and go back and change the course of El Salvadorean history, but I very much doubt it. I suspect that that is the start of a potentially much bigger programme of military assistance to the Government of El Salvador and further training that may be offered in the future. It is a scandal of the highest order that the British Government should be prepared to offer training to that officer.

The question we have to ask is whether the British Government recognise that there are continuing and serious abuses of human rights in El Salvador. Do they recognise that trade union leaders have regularly been imprisoned and shot for going about their lawful business? Do they recognise that the human rights organisations are continually harassed and under pressure? Do they recognise that the illegal death squads are still in operation and that the best policy that the British Government could follow is not one of giving direct approval and assistance to the Government and the military, but to have some consideration for the human rights causes within that region.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the hon. Gentleman think that the situation in El Salvador can best be improved by the United States using its power to try to strengthen the civilian administration, tame the military and secure human rights improvements, or by the civil war being fought to a painful finish?

Mr. Corbyn: Nobody wants the civil war fought to a painful finish. There was the possibility of talks on a number of occasions last year between the FMLN and the government and I would hope that those talks can be resumed. However, they are unlikely to be resumed in an atmosphere where the United States continues to pour in so much money that it backs up everything that the El Salvadorean military does and encourages it to continue the prosecution of the civil war to the bloodiest conclusion it can possibly reach.

Nicaragua is the country that gets most of the publicity within the region and it is the country that gets the odium of the United States Administration. Quite simply, anyone who has looked at the history of Nicaragua pre-1979, the horrors that the Somoza dictatorship caused for the ordinary people of the country and the thousands of people who died at the hands of the secret police, will realise that the Sandinista revolution of 1979 was about an open and democratic society, freedom of expression, and the right of those poor people to have access to health, education, housing and to some hope for their children. That is still what it is about. That is very much what it is about when one talks to some of the poorest people in Nicaragua. Despite all that they have gone through in the past seven years, the interesting thing is that support for the Sandinistas has not reduced or fallen away. They have not had opposition internally to their policies. They have had increased support because, basically, there is an understanding of what the Sandinista revolution is all about and what the Sandinistas are trying to achieve.

If one looked at any Third world country and said that in a period of seven years it had dramatically reduced illiteracy, increased employment, increased education and set up some sort of a health service, one would say that that was good. Indeed, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation gave the Nicaraguan Government a prize for their literacy programme. Those would have been tremendous achievements for any country, but to achieve them at the same time as having an economic embargo imposed on it by its former largest trading partner, the United States, and with the United States continuously and obsessively funding the Contras, guard in its determination to destroy everything that the Sandinista revolution has achieved, is even more tremendous.

The British Government's role throughout has been to reduce aid to Nicaragua, to issue the most blood-curdling statements about alleged denials of democracy in Nicaragua, and to refuse to understand the social process in Nicaragua.

Even now I urge the Minister to go to Nicaragua and visit any village on the Atlantic or the Pacific coast, on the borders with Honduras or with Costa Rica and, with an interpreter, unless he speaks Spanish, to talk to the ordinary people and ask them what the Sandinista revolution has meant to them during the past seven years. Rather he should do that than read the CIA briefs on which, presumably, the Foreign Office relies for all its information.

Serious news has come through more recently. To some extent, the entire Iran-gate saga can be described as slightly farcical at times. Indeed, reading some sections of the Tower commission report, it is slightly farcical. However, it is also bloodthirsty and frightening that the

President in the White House is so obsessed with destroying the Nicaraguan Government. The British Government go along with that, as do many others.

I shall give a quotation to show how quickly history changes. On 23 January 1985 the Iranian Prime Minister, Hussein Maussavi met the Nicaraguan President, Daniel Ortega, in Managua. The following day President Reagan stated:

"A new danger we see in Central America is the support being given to the Sandinistas by Colonel Qaddafi's Libya, the PLO, and most recently, the Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran."

That was President Reagan early in 1985, telling us of the dangers of Iran supporting the Sandinistan Government.

Now in March 1987 there are revelations of the British Government's involvement in running guns to the Contras. I refer to *The Observer* of 8 March and to an article by Hugh O'Shaugnessy, David Leigh and Simon de Bruxelles about the arms shipment to Costa Rica that was attempted in 1985. At the same time as President Reagan was announcing that he was concerned about the relationship between the Sandinistas and the Government of Ayatollah Khomeini, the British Government were apparently knowledgeable about, if not involved with the ship the Silver Sea that was used to run guns to the Contras to continue the bloodthirsty civil war in central America. The least——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but will he please give the House some evidence to support his assertion that the British Government were knowledgeable about that vessel?

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I shall.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will give that information later. I am quite happy to give it now, but I would rather like the Minister to contain his excitement until my hon. Friend's speech later in this important debate.

I refer the Minister to *The Observer* and the references to the fact that the arms shipment to Costa Rica was attempted in 1985, using the British ship the Silver Sea with the full knowledge of the British and American Governments and with the promise of American military protection, according to the ship's chief officer, Mr. John Collins. Has any action been taken against Mr. John Collins? No. Has any action been taken against *The Observer*? No. Has any refutation ever been made about that story or any of the other stories?

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Mr. Corbyn: I have yet to hear them. I look forward to what the Minister has to say about that. If he wishes to intervene now he is welcome.

Mr. Eggar: I shall wait for the speech of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Mr. Corbyn: More sinister in many ways than the illegal supply of arms to the Contras for their attempt to destroy the Nicaraguan Government is the supply of mercenaries through KMS. It apparently enjoys an office in London, the approval of the British Government in that it is employed on security duties in some British embassies in the middle east and other places——

Mr. Eggar: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the Labour Government appointed KMS to carry out protection work on behalf of individual diplomats and diplomatic buildings in 1975?

Mr. Corbyn: I understand that KMS was appointed on security duties in 1975, but there is no evidence that at that time it was involved in financing and recruiting mercenaries to fight in central America. The Minister is clutching at the most curious straws when he should mount an investigation into KMS supplying mercenaries to Nicaragua and Sri Lanka. He seems more interested in what the Labour Government may or may not have done 12 years ago than in what is happening now in central America and at the KMS office in London.

I have a photocopy of the thoughts of Lt-Col Oliver North——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-East): Oh dear, it will not be a big bit of paper, will it?

Mr. Corbyn: It is not a big bit of paper, but it is a wonder what can be done on a photocopier that enlarges. The paper is covered in a series of doodlings. On the left it says "US", in the middle it says "Multi" and on the right it says "O/S". I am not sure what all those mean. Then there are several dots and lines down to the bottom of the page which states "KMS" which is linked with gun running between the United States, the middle east, Israel and the Contras in Nicaragua.

It is all very well for the British Government to say that this has nothing to do with them and to wash their hands of it; it has a great deal to do with them, because KMS operates in London and has their approval in contracts elsewhere and because of what is happening in central America and the professed statements of the British Government on peace within that region.

When he replies I hope that the Minister will at least have the good grace to admit that KMS is up to no good, and to announce an investigation into its activities and that the Government will reconsider the contracts between the British Government and KMS.

Recently, the British Government have resumed full diplomatic relations with Guatemala, but it is unclear exactly what discussions have taken place with the Guatemalan Government. The British Government are on record as criticising that Government's human rights' record prior to Mr. Cerezo's election as President. yet the continued abuses of human rights there suggest that all is not as it should be. Early in his term, for example, the President announced that he would not attempt to repeal the amnesty, which assures that nobody will be prosecuted for killing tens of thousands of civilians and for destroying over 400 rural villages. That is reported in the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group and Americas Watch of February 1987. It continues:

"Throughout 1986, violent killings were reported in the Guatemalan press at the rate of over 100 per month and abductions and disappearances have also continued. Although the identity of those responsible for the violence is difficult to determine in at least some of the cases, the security forces appeared to be involved. This is based on the condition of some of the bodies found with marks of torture and hands bound, the fact that some of the victims were abducted and disappeared before their corpses appeared, and the failure to investigate these crimes or to punish those responsible."

Before the Government decide that President Cerezo is a second Napoleon Duarte, therefore somebody who must be given unconditional support in that region, I suggest

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that they examine Guatemala's human rights record and tell us exactly what arrangements have been made in the dispute between Guatemala and Belize over territorial claims. No statement has been made by the British Government at any stage about that.

It would be wrong to conclude any discussion about central America without mentioning the awful human tragedies of the region that have occurred in the civil wars — the homelessness, the disappearances, the unbridled power enjoyed by the military in some of the region and the sheer horror and misery of the number of refugees. There are over 400,000 refugees in Mexico, 150,000 of whom come from Guatemala and 100,000 of those are not in camps under any influence or control of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. There is a need for an extremely urgent appraisal of the refugee policy towards the region as a whole.

We are witnessing, in the horror of what is happening in central America, an American Administration obsessed with destroying the Government of Nicaragua, not because even in President Reagan's wildest dreams it represents a threat to anyone in the region but because it represents the threat of a good example. It represents a threat through its example in land reform, education reform, housing reform and health reform. It is interesting that when the Contra rebels attack in the rural areas and border regions of Nicaragua, they first make for the health centres and schools, the products of that revolution, because the Contra rebels hope to destroy the Government through that process.

The American Administration are obsessed with that aim. There is also considerable opposition to the American Administration. The booklet "In Contempt of Congress — The Reagan Record of Deceit and Illegality on Central America" very carefully argues the case about all the illegal actions of the Reagan Administration within the region. A very detailed report has also been produced by Witness for Peace, a Quaker organisation reporting on the effects of the Contra attacks against Nicaragua. Any section of that report will show what the horror of American policy means.

We are entitled to know exactly where the British Government stand in relation to their policy towards the region. Are they giving uncritical support to the United States in all it actions in the region? If so, they should say so. If not, they should tell us where their actions differ from United States policy within the region. We should have an assurance that in future voting at the United Nations the British Government will not act as they have acted in the past—as a poodle for President Reagan's policies.

With regard to the provision of arms to the Contras and KMS, we need a statement that no arms will go to the Contras from this country and that there will be an investigation into KMS and the relationships that some Tory Members' staff have towards the Contras and the conference that was held recently in London. Finally, we need to know that there will be a resumption of aid to Nicaragua on the level that is offered to other countries within that region so that the Nicaraguans can develop their economy in the way that they want, in a way which will not suffer interference from foreign powers.

We are witnessing a social process throughout that region of people trying to improve their own living standards and to gain some salvation from the misery of their lives. However, the American Administration are determined to turn the clock back to the dictatorships of Somoza and the United Fruit Company that dominated the region for so long. The British Government are unclear about their policy, but they have effectively followed the United States, poodle-like, in everything that the United States has done in the region.

This is a serious issue. The region is serious and I believe that the threat of the civil wars in the region to world peace is very serious indeed. The issue deserves far more attention and more serious consideration than the British Government have been prepared to give it.

3.18 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I share the view expressed by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in his demand for a clear statement of British Government policy on central America and about Nicaragua in particular. I will differ with him on one or two points, but on that point I very much agree with him. Before I consider Nicaragua, I think that there is at least something to be welcomed in the Guatemalan Government's more realistic attitude towards the rights and the position of the people of Belize. We all hope for significant human rights improvements in Guatemala. It is early yet to make an assessment of the human rights situation, but there has at least been a more realistic appreciation that the people of Belize are entitled to order their own affairs, and Guatemala ought to seek good and friendly relations with it if it wants to make progress.

The United States has legitimate interests in central America. It is not surprising that it takes a close interest, and is heavily committed, in many countries there. Many of us would like American power used more explicitly to support movement towards democracy and to tame the military in many of the countries concerned. The military are the real base of power in most of these countries, and the nominal civilian leaders are in a weak position. The United States could use its power to strengthen the civilianising and democratic trends much more than it appears to be doing. It should also support moves towards social progress, without which there is little hope for the poor of those very poor countries.

I speak on behalf of the alliance and take a slightly different view of Nicaragua from some hon. Members. I am a strong supporter of our alliance with America. I am not a Socialist and do not have an automatic ideological sympathy with the Sandinistas based on a shared emphasis on Socialism or Marxism. It is therefore all the more important that I should stress our view that American action in support of the Contras is wholly wrong.

The hon. Member for Islington, North mentioned the Sandinista revolution in some detail. I admire some of what has been done. I admire the Government's record on literacy, public health, educational development and several other matters. I support the principle, espoused in that revolution, of pluralism, and believe that it should be sustained. When I see that principle threatened, I find myself arguing with the Sandinista Government and making representations to them.

I am well aware that that Government made some dramatic mistakes in their early years and that they recognised the fact—a quality that one might like to see shown more widely by Governments. There was clear

recognition of the Government's mistakes about the relocation of Mesquito indians and the ruthless action that the Nicaraguan forces allowed to go on at that time.

I still complain whenever human rights abuses arise in Nicaragua. We cannot be selective about human rights abuses. Wherever they arise, the British Government should take a firm stand on the side of human rights and liberty. There have been limitations on press freedom in Nicaragua, detention of opposition members and leaders and the system of popular tribunals has rightly been criticised by Amnesty International. Concern for the pressures under which the Sandinista Government are put ought not to mute our outspokenness on issues such as this.

Nicaragua has everything to gain from having the best possible human rights record. In a few weeks' time, the Inter-Parliamentary Union will have a major conference in Managua. That will be an opportunity for the Nicaraguans to set out their stall and convince a lot of visiting parliamentarians about their human rights record. The conference could be a valuable occasion, and I hope that the Nicaraguan Government can demonstrate further moves towards full implementation of constitutional protection and the removal of limitations that have been put in place.

I am firmly convinced that the United States' action in support of the Contras is quite wrong. It is wrong in international law, as the International Court of Justice has made clear. It is wrong because it is an attack on a sovereign state which is entitled to order its own affairs. It is a poor country where development is seriously inhibited by the massive cost of resisting external attack. It is wrong because it is an attack on an elected Government. There is no logic or consistency in the claim that failings in democracy or human rights in Nicaragua somehow justify support of that external attack.

It is not possible to sustain that view when one examines the human rights records of many other countries in Central and South America. If that were the logic of the view, the United States would be launching attacks on numerous countries, including some with particularly bad human rights records, which it has persistently supported over the years. There is no logical basis in the Nicaraguan human rights limitations such as I have described for the military attack which is launched on that country.

The American action is wrong also because it involves propping up a discredited movement whose actions on human rights are far more horrific than those for which one can criticise the Nicaraguan Government. The actions of the Contras in the areas in which they have operated have been unbelievably horrific. It is clearly a case of exporting terrorism from the United States into central America—exporting it by giving direct sustenance and support and by giving those engaged in this process to and from the US.

It is also manifestly wrong because it has involved extensive illegal, unauthorised actions which could not be publicly defended, and that is why they went on under cover—actions by White House staff for which they did not wish to be publicly accountable. The very nature of that activity shows how frightened they were of responsible American public opinion about the actions on which they were engaged. It is also a fundamental mistake on the part of the United States Government, because it is likely to make Nicaraguans more hostile to America and more dependent on other allies, whom the United States does not want to see strengthened in that area.

Where does that leave the United Kingdom? The British Government have often stated that they are in favour of a peaceful solution and that they support the Contadora process. But they have always stopped short of dissociating themselves in a specific way from the actions that the United States takes. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Minister is propounding the Foreign Office line—of support for peaceful solutions and the Contadora process — while the Prime Minister is continuing to align herself with the President and those of his most reactionary advisers who have got him into the mess in which he now finds himself, for that is the effect of the Prime Minister's stand. It is to give aid and comfort to the very people who have put the President in his present embarrassment.

It is no service to a friend or ally not to tell him when one thinks he is wrong. One does not do a friend or ally a service to allow it to be widely believed over a long period that one supports him in actions which responsible American opinion widely rejects. In addition to that stand taken by the Prime Minister, the suspicion remains that arms have gone from this country into the conflict, and the allegation has been made that the Government were aware of that flow of arms.

At the very least, the Government were responsible for the mechanisms by which that process should have been known. They were responsible for the customs examination of the outgoing arms and for examining the manifests of the contents of vessels such as the Silver Sea. The Government are aware of the activities of firms such as KMS, so they were in a position to have some idea of what was going on.

It may be that the Government had no knowledge whatever, but the House cannot be satisfied about that until a proper report has been made to Parliament following a thorough investigation by the Government of the matter. I hope the Minister will agree to that, as we thought Baroness Young had agreed to it on another occasion.

It is no part of a mature international alliance not to criticise one's ally when he is wrong, and I say on behalf of the alliance that were we in government, we should want to make it much clearer that Britain does not support the action that is being taken by the United States President. The policy on which President Reagan has been engaged is not only certain to fail but is certain to be abandoned before long. It is a tragedy that all this has been visited on a country which is so poor and which could make much better use of the limited resources at its disposal than by defending itself in a futile and damaging military conflict such as this.

3.29 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for initiating this debate. He has sketched a comprehensive picture of central America and has done well to point out the importance of the region and of the individual countries. I should like to refer to Guatemala, a country which tends to be overshadowed by other countries in the region, for obvious reasons.

There has been a change in British Government policy toward Guatemala since the election of the nominally

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civilian government of Vinicio Cerezo. The British Government are apparently playing a part in maintaining the claim that there has been a dramatic improvement in human rights. Baroness Young has said that a limited aid package will be given to Guatemala and diplomatic relations between the two countries have been restored. Inevitably, questions arise as to the relationship between Guatemala and Belize, and I hope that the Minister will briefly touch on that.

The central question is whether there has been an improvement in human rights in Guatemala. I regret the fact that recently the British Government voted in the United Nations to remove Guatemala's status as an international pariah and to withdraw the special rapporteur. Presumably, that was premised on hard evidence that the position in that country had changed, yet that runs counter to information coming out of Guatemala and the surrounding region. It is widely documented that significant abuses of human rights are occurring.

The British parliamentary human rights group and Americas Watch paid a semi-compliment to President Cerezo when they said:

"Regrettably, we must express disappointment"

at the human rights situation. They said:

"We do not question President Cerezo's personal commitment to improve the human rights situation . . . we recognise that some important improvements in human rights are taking place. There is greater freedom of expression in Guatemala today than at any time in the past decade."

But they continued:

"Despite the improvements that have taken place during President Cerezo's first year, the human rights situation in Guatemala remains terrible."

They tacitly recognise that they are talking about the country which, apart from Kampuchea during the period of Pol Pot, witnessed the worst and most systematic abuse of human rights in recent history. So horrific and bestial were its practices that it earned a reputation throughout the world as being controlled by an evil regime. The modest gains in Guatemala are to be welcomed, but the report on human rights in Guatemala documents significant cases of the same kinds of abuse.

Serious observers have reported that there is not the need in Guatemala for the level of oppression that occurred in the early 1980s and that there is not the need for the army to massacre as it did in the 1980s, because the civilian population is well cowed. The system of civilian patrols and of model villages and a mainly Indian population simply cannot resist whatever the army wants to do.

Despite that, the report of the parliamentary human rights group gives frightening evidence of the abuse of its position by the army in rural areas, with the killing of innocent civilians and almost gratuitous violence. Even in the cities, where there is perhaps some evidence of an improvement in human rights, there are many examples of abuse affecting those who are politically active. The tortured corpses of two active agricultural trade unionists were found in Quezaltenango in the latter part of last year.

The most notorious recent example is that of Celso Lopez Jop, a press secretary of the Christian Democratic party to which President Cerezo belongs, who in December last year was found tortured and killed in Mixco, not far from Guatemala City. Local Christian Democrat leaders claim that, before he died, Lopez Jop said that his assailants were members of the National Police. Despite that, President Cerezo has effectively dismissed the claim and said that there is no political motive, yet senior members of his party, including the President of the Congress, have sharply disagreed with him.

President Cerezo has recently been engaged in a massive diplomatic offensive to improve the image of Guatemala abroad. That campaign certainly seems to have influenced the British and other European Governments. If there is no evidence to suggest that there has been an improvement in human rights, but the British Government assume that that is the case, it suggests that we do not care about the violence and violation of human rights taking place in that country. Parliament should not stand for that.

It is incumbent upon the Government to say that the Government of Guatemala are guilty until they prove their innocence. That innocence has not been proven. Unless the Minister can tell us that there is significant evidence of improvement, I suggest that he should tell the Foreign Secretary that the process of relations with Guatemala should be rethought to ensure that aid is not given and that existing diplomatic relations remain for the purpose of monitoring the level of human rights in that country.

3.35 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In the few minutes available to me I will confine my remarks to British Government policy in respect of Nicaragua. I declare my interest in that, recently, I became the chairman of the British-Nicaragua parliamentary group. It is the only all-party parliamentary grouping that I have joined and perhaps that is a mark of how strongly I feel about the position in Nicaragua and the attitude of the American Government to the country.

It is extremely difficult to comprehend how the most powerful country on earth can feel so threatened by a tiny country with a population of some 2·8 million. The hypocrisy emerges when one realises how long Nicaragua suffered under the Somoza family. At that time criticisms from the United States Government about conditions in the country were muted, to say the least. There was enormous political and economic support for one of the vilest dictatorships in that part of central America.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has already commented on the bizzare way in which President Reagan has got himself embroiled in the problem. He seems to be manipulated by a combination of anti-Communist zealots and religious maniacs. I have still not understood how on earth it was felt that America could in some way influence Iran by sending Christmas cakes and bibles to an Islamic fundamentalist state. Perhaps that says something about the state of mind of the President of the United States and those who advise him. It is no wonder that the person who took the cakes and bibles to that country subsequently tried to commit suicide.

It should be remembered that, in April, the Inter-Parliamentary Union is meeting in Managua and I understand that the United States will not be represented —that is a great pity. However, at the same time as the delegation from the House will be in Managua, the United States will have some 50,000 service men and women on an exercise in Honduras that I believe is called Solid

Shield. That exercise is set to coincide with the spring offensive of the Contras. We must ask whether that exercise is part of a preparation for the invasion of Nicaragua. However, the five-year terrorist campaign conducted by the Contras has been a singular failure and has won no support in that country.

It is true that the American Government have been involving themselves in international terrorism and therefore they have lessened their ability and power to condemn other regimes, such as Libya, that the American Government believe are involved in international terrorism.

So far we have discussed the possibility of the British arms being supplied to the Contras. I accept that that has not happened directly, but we must know from the Minister whether there is any knowledge, within the Government, of British-manufactured arms ending up in the hands of the Contras. Is there any knowledge of British arms being in the hands of the Contras? that is a question that we need to have answered this morning. There are many stories flying around and it might assist if the Government were to think about extending end-user certificates to arms exports to the United States, as Lord Kennet suggested in another place to Lord Trefgarne, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, only to receive a dusty answer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) mentioned British bilateral aid to Nicaragua. The Library has supplied me with figures showing that for the six years between 1974 and 1979, British aid to Nicaragua averaged £295,000 a year. In the six years between 1980 and 1985, in the period immediately following the overthrow of Somoza, the average fell to £76,000 per annum. It reached an all-time low of £9,000 in 1984. It increased to £116,000 in 1985, and I should like to know the figure for 1986.

Will the Government be pressing for an EEC initiative on central America? Will the British Government insist that the United States Government adhere to international law and attempt to reach a political solution through the Contadora process? Will the British Government be prepared to step up bilateral aid to Nicaragua? Will we be establishing full representation in Nicaragua, with an ambassador based in Managua? The Minister will know that, from 13 March, the Nicaraguan Government have requested the good offices of the Contadora to form an investigative commission to prevent further attacks from across the borders of neighbouring states. That refutes the idea that Nicaragua is attempting to destabilise surrounding states. It is asking for the protection of the Contadora states and thereby establishing that the aggression is coming across the border from Honduras and not going the other way.

It is clear from what we have heard this morning and from what we have read that the people of Nicaragua are struggling to establish their freedom and much deserve the support of all civilised nations. On this occasion I hope that Britain can be counted among the civilised.

3.42 am

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on being lucky once again in the Consolidated Fund debate and on his eloquent and comprehensive introduction to the debate. Whatever criticism the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) may have of the Sandinista regime, I am sure that he shares the view of my hon. Friend and me that that is no justification for United States support for what is now the largest state-sponsored example of terrorism in the world. It is terrorism which has been ruled illegal by the International Court of Justice, the highest court in the world.

I shall concentrate on the British connection in the supply of arms to the Contra terrorists, with no disrespect to all the other important issues which have been dealt with by my colleagues and with which I have dealt elsewhere. The issue is urgent, and it is central to the problems of the entire region. I want to show that a web of intrigue and deception has been built up and that there have been clandestine operations to supply arms to the Contra terrorists with, in my view, the tacit approval of the British Government. This has contravened two of the main planks of British foreign policy. The first plank is the Government's avowed opposition to terrorism. The second is their avowed support for a peaceful solution to the problems in central America.

We are not considering the overt support or approval of the supply of arms to the Contra terrorists, which is what the Minister and his colleagues always say is not taking place. No one suggests that Short Brothers or anyone else applies for export licences to the Department of Trade and Industry, which are then transferred to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for approval, which leads to the supply of Blowpipe missiles or whatever to the Contra terrorists. It is not done like that. Instead, there is a clandestine operation.

I am concerned that this issue has arisen because we have heard previously that the British Government on two occasions, at the time of the ruling of the International Court of Justice and on the £100 million decision by Congress, made some quite positive statements through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. They said that they accepted the International Court's rulings — that was Britain's normal practice — and that they did not think that the problems of central America should be solved by military means.

Clearly, coming into line with civilised opinion here and throughout the world was not popular with the American Administration. I have always had my suspicions — as some of my colleagues have had — about the real actions that the Government have been undertaking. It is easy to see how President Reagan's reaction to what was said by the Foreign Office can have influenced United Kingdom policy. To a great extent, I go along with the remarks by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. There seems to be a prime ministerial policy on this matter that is quite separate from Foreign Office policy. It is easy to see how that can arise.

We know of Reagan's obsession with Nicaragua. We know of the special relationship between President Reagan and the Prime Minister. We know that there have been other examples of complicity in which the President required a willing accomplice. We saw that in the withdrawal from UNESCO, in the F111 bombing of Tripoli, and, in the Nicaraguan context, in support of the blocking of the IADB loans. We also know that the Contra terrorists wanted the accurate Blowpipe missiles and other arms from the United Kingdom. It is reasonable to assume that even our Prime Minister could not provide

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them directly and openly, as I said earlier, and so a nod and a wink to the private sector arms dealers — the merchants of death—was the likely way of doing it.

We heard about the Silver Sea. I do not rely only on articles in *The Observer*. I have a copy of a document, signed by John Collins, who became captain of the Silver Sea, about its despatch from Portsmouth on 15 February and about how it was supposedly on an innocent mission and took arms on board. The owner of the Silver Sea told him:

"we had the blessing of our own government, also that of the United States."

That document was signed by someone who was principally involved. The Minister needs to try to address that matter. In his statement, John Collins also said that he reported to special branch. When he got back, he telephoned special branch and told them the truth regarding the Silver Sea. He said:

"I had already been interviewed by them after my return from France."

What has happened to the special branch report, the investigations and the statements that they took? Has any report been produced to the Minister or to any other Minister? Will the Minister say what is in the report? As the hon. Member for Berwick-on-Tweed said — I also got this information in answer to a parliamentary question — there has been a Customs and Excise investigation into the Silver Sea. What has been the result? Does the Foreign Office know what is going on and what Customs and Excise is doing about this strange operation? Is a warrant out for the owner of the Silver Sea, Bill Sutton? Are the police or Customs and Excise officials making every effort to locate and question this man, who is responsible for setting up an arms supply deal in Costa Rica on his way to the Contras? Is William Sutton known to any Minister, particularly the Prime Minister?

What is the position of Mr. John Collins? On Monday 16 March he was to talk to the press, but he pulled out at the last minute, and said that he would talk only to me. He was then reluctant to do that—he had cold feet. Is the Minister aware of any pressure being applied to John Collins by the Government, any of their agencies or anyone else, to keep quiet about the connection, and particularly the Government's connection, with the operation?

Some of my hon. Friends have referred to the very shadowy KMS operation in London. Why has the Prime Minister blocked questions about her meetings with Major David Walker of KMS? What is she afraid of? Major Walker has been described as Britain's Colonel Oliver North. What is the link between KMS and the Contra arms supply that is hinted at in Colonel North's doodlings, as reproduced in the Tower commission report and confirmed by the Prime Minister's reply to me on 4 March. Has the Department considered carrying out an investigation? We thought we had convinced Lady Young that an investigation should be carried out, but before she could get anything moving, somebody must have taken the matter out of her hands.

The evidence in the Tower commission report deals with the web of intrigue and confirms our suspicions about the British Government's involvement. It gives an account of the setting up of a system for the supply of Blowpipe missiles to the Contra terrorists. It is surprising and disappointing that little publicity has been given to it. Because of the concentration on President Reagan's involvement, perhaps the British connection was overlooked. It is political dynamite.

I shall refer to two passages in the Tower commission report. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will deal with them.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that it is a remarkable testament to the United States as a society that the Tower Commission report was published? If such things had happened in this country, we should never have heard about them.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is the precise point on which I shall end my speech—but not yet. An investigation of that kind is needed into the British connection. All credit is due to the United States for being able to conduct that kind of investigation.

Page 465 of the version of the Tower commission report that is before me says:

"On March 26, 1986, three months after Mr. McFarlane left Government service, Lt. Col. North informed Mr. McFarlane of his efforts . . . to obtain Blowpipe launchers and missiles for the Contras: We are trying to find a way to get 10 Blowpipe launchers and 20 missiles from a South American country"—

which we understand to be Chile—

"thru the Short Bros Rep . . . Short Bros, the manufacturer of the Blowpipe, is willing to arrange the deal, conduct the training and even send UK 'technical reps' forward if we can close the arrangement . . . we have a"—

and the country is deleted—

"end-user certificate which is acceptable to that South American country."

There is direct evidence that Short Brothers was conniving at evading the provisions of the Export of Goods (Control) (Amendment) Order.

Will the Government now consider prosecuting Short Brothers? Did Short Brothers negotiate with Colonel North on its own initiative, or was it asked to do it—as I suspect—by the Prime Minister? Will the Government launch an investigation into the real destination of all Blowpipe missiles that were exported in 1985 and 1986, or should we assume that Short Brothers acted in direct contravention of the Government's stated policy on Nicaragua, at the instigation of the Government? Will the Minister explicitly condemn the action of Short Brothers and now allow the British public to have the information that we assume is available to the CIA? Will he publish the details of Blowpipe exports?

On page 344, the report says:

"On June 10, 1986, North wrote to Poindexter: 'Critically needed items are being flown in from Europe to the expanded warehouse facility at Ilopango.' In the same note North went on: 'We should look to going back to a head of an allied government on the blowpipes if we are going to do anything at all about outside support in the next few days, and I would love to carry the letter from Ronald Reagan.'"

That implies the involvement of a European Government. Can the Minister categorically deny that any of that came from Britain? How many allied Governments would the Americans go to about Blowpipe? The use of the words "going back" are revealing. Do they not show that the matter had been discussed at a different point?

That brings me to one of the most important questions that I want the Minister to answer. Were Blowpipes and the supply of those missiles discussed between Colonel North, Mr. Casey—the then head of the CIA—and the Prime Minister? Did Colonel North carry a letter from

Ronald Reagan on either or both of his visits and in the meetings that he had with the Prime Minister during 1986? Will the Under-Secretary get the Prime Minister to publish the letter and the minutes of those meetings? We need to know what happened at those meetings between Mr. Casey, Mr. North and the Prime Minister last year. What were they talking about if it was not the supply of Blowpipe missiles to the Contra terrorists?

This is a matter of great importance. I do not believe that that supply could have taken place without Government awareness at the very least, or their tacit approval.

It is unlikely that the Under-Secretary will be able to deal with the questions in a way that will satisfy us, if he deals with them at all. I doubt whether the Under-Secretary even knew what was going on when all this was taking place.

I issue the Under-Secretary this warning. We shall pursue this matter relentlessly until the truth is revealed. That can only be done, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, if an independent investigation is set up, as was done in the United States. The Minister should be honest and straightforward today, because I expect further revelations soon. It is better for the Under-Secretary to be honest now than for it to be proved later that he has been dishonest. The pressure for an investigation will become inexorable. It is better to set up that investigation now rather than later.

3.57 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): May I join other hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on putting his name forward tonight. However, I wish that he had chosen a more appropriate time to hold the debate. Having listened to the debate I wish also that his hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) had been here when he should have been for Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions last Wednesday. We might have been spared a disruptive night.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, North for having given his hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) an opportunity to give vent to his over-active imagination. It has long been a characteristic of his and I have sometimes wondered whether it is a cause or a symptom of his problems. I suppose that he feels that he must go on fantasising in some vague hope that his fantasies will suddenly turn into reality, rather like Cinderella at the ball.

Hon. Members have expressed their concerns about Central America, and it is right that they should do so. It is also of considerable concern to the Government. I can only deplore the way in which some hon. Members persist in wilfully misrepresenting the Government's policy towards the region. The obsessive theme that has come from Opposition Members is all the more unjustifiable when we have explained in clear terms, and on numerous occasions in the House and elsewhere, our consistent policy. We support a peaceful, political negotiated solution to the region's problems. Sadly, that message—which I have spelt out time and time again—seems to have fallen on the deaf ears of Opposition Members. Instead, it seems to have been subsumed in a series of unfounded, ill-researched assertions which do no credit to the hon. Member for Islington, North or the reputation of the House.

Allegations have been made that the Government gave approval for the supply of Blowpipes to the Contras. Those allegations are entirely without foundation. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already made this quite clear to the House. Other baseless and irresponsible allegations have been made and I should like to reiterate in the strongest terms that at no time have the Government authorised the supply of arms to the Contras.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley made allegations about the role of Short Brothers. Whatever approaches may have been made to Short Brothers on behalf of the Contras—and we saw the Tower commission report before the hon. Gentleman did—no supply of Blowpipe missiles to the Contras was authorised. As I have already told the hon. Gentleman, the United States Government have assured us that there are no Blowpipe missiles in Contra hands and that they have no intention of supplying Blowpipes.

We have consistently called for a reduction in arms levels in central America. That has been our consistent policy and we shall stick to it. We have clearly demonstrated over past years our support for a political and not a military solution to the problems of the region. Our actions have been and will continue to be fully—and I stress fully—consistent with that policy.

I shall now deal with two of the more fanciful allegations that were made first about the Silver Sea and secondly about KMS. The wild allegation that any member of the Government had knowledge of a reported arms shipment on the Silver Sea to the Contras is without basis and that allegation has already been quite clearly denied. We have seen various versions of the apparently bizarre events surrounding the voyage of the Silver Sea from Southhampton to Brest. At times the events seemed to have more of a "Pirates of Penzance" feel than the feel of any serious arms smuggling operation.

All our reports appear to coincide in the fact that after leaving Southampton the ship got no further than Brest after the crew became sea sick and the captain felt that he had to put in and ask the French authorities for assistance. The captain was subsequently charged with importing arms into France. The French public prosecutor is reported to have said that no significant war material was found. The items found were three or four jeeps, military communications equipment, rubber dinghies, secondhand military uniforms and some daggers.

From questioning the crew it was believed that the ship was bound for Africa. Whatever may be the truth about the Silver Sea, the fact remains that we have no knowledge about its sailing nor did we at any time authorise any supply of arms to the Contras.

I shall now turn to the allegations that the Government were aware of or approved the alleged involvement of KMS with the Contras. Those allegations are entirely without foundation. It is true that at various times between 1975 and 1982 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office employed KMS to provide personal and building protection at those of our posts overseas which were subject to a high level of threat of violent attack, but KMS has not been employed in any capacity since 1982.

As a commercial company, KMS contracts to provide services and it is not, of course, controlled by the Government. We are, of course, aware of the reference to

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KMS in the Tower commission report, but we have seen no other evidence of its alleged involvement with the Contras. The hon. Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley and for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) suggested that there should be an inquiry into these wild and fanciful allegations.

The hon. Member for Islington, North and the Liberal spokesman suggested that there should be an inquiry into these wild and fanciful allegations. There is nothing to inquire into. The allegations are nothing more than wild, stray imagination that has been put together in a fanciful web by the hon. Gentleman on the Opposition Front Bench. On the role of human rights in Guatemala——

Mr. Foulkes: Just on one point.

Mr. Eggar: It is unreasonable of the hon. Gentleman to have left me so little time. I have only six minutes left and I would like to do justice to the other points raised in this debate.

Mr. Corbyn: It is not my hon. Friend's fault.

Mr. Eggar: I agree. It is the fault of the hon. Member for Islington, North, but his hon. Friend will have to suffer on his account.

The question of human rights in Guatemala was raised. We believe that the incidence of human rights violations such as disappearances and death squad killings has decreased considerably since the present Government in Guatemala came to power, and we hope this improvement will continue. We condemn all violations of human rights wherever they occur. We do not believe, however, that the present Guatemalan Government sanctions those violations that still occur.

We are strengthened in our view by the fact that the United Nations special representative on human rights in Guatemala has expressed similar sentiments to our own in his report to the 1987 United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Of course, there is still a long way to go in improving human rights within Guatemala. My right hon. Friend Baroness Young made exactly that point to the President of Guatemala during her visit to that country. The hon. Member for Islington, North also raised the question of the rapprochement that appears to be taking place between Guatemala and Belize. We welcome any improvement in relations between those two sovereign and independent countries, but we do not have any direct role in any discussions that may take place.

I turn to the role of the Contadora group. The Government, together with our European partners, have given practical support to the efforts of the Contadora group to promote the resolution of the problems of South America through regional multilateral negotiations. We want to see, and have supported practically, a comprehensive, verifiable and simultaneously implemented agreement on the basis of the Contadora objectives agreed by all five Central American countries in September 1983.

The basic plank of our policy—and I was asked to express it—is support for the Contadora process. The twenty-one objectives drawn up and agreed by all the Contadora and central American states as the basis of a regional settlement have gained widespread international support. They include the end of support for cross-border subversion and destabilisation, an end to the arms race and foreign military bases and advisers, the elimination of traffic in arms, a full pluralist democracy, internal reconciliation and respect for human rights.

We have no doubt that a comprehensive settlement based on these objectives would be the best solution. We are encouraged by the Decision of the Presidents of the five central American states to meet within the next two months at Esquipulas in Guatemala to discuss proposals for peace that have been put forward by President Arias of Costa Rica. This is a highly significant development, since peace can only be achieved through an agreement among the central Americans themselves. The Contadora group and its support group have welcomed this decision and reaffirm their willingness to support efforts to achieve peace in the region. The aims of both the Contadora peace plan and the Costa Rican proposals are to promote democracy and to restore peace and stability to the region. We support these aims.

I move now to a general discussion of democracy in the central American region. There have been some encouraging developments in this region over the past two or three years. In Belize, which has fortunately managed to stay outside the conflicts in the region, democracy is flourishing, as the elections of 1985 showed. In Guatemala, a democratically elected Government took power in January 1986 for the first time for more than 30 years. That Government are committed to economic and social development and an improvement in human rights. In December, we agreed with the new Government to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. In Honduras, elections were held in November 1985, which were widely judged to have been free and fair. The transfer of power in January 1986 from one democratically elected civilian president to another was the first such transfer for 50 years. Costa Rica's democratic credentials are well established, and I have already referred to its valiant efforts to promote peace in the area.

Sadly, in Nicaragua, the situation is different. I wish that Opposition Members had expressed a slightly more balanced view of what is happening there. For instance, why, with the exception of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, did they not urge the Nicaraguan Government to establish a full pluralist democracy? Why did they not urge the Nicaraguan Government to reduce massive stockpiles of Soviet weaponry? Why did they not urge that Government to end support for subversion in neighbouring countries? Why did——

In accordance with MR. SPEAKER'S *Ruling*—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1983; Vol. 36, c. 19] *the Debate was concluded.*

Textiles (ERDF)

4.11 am

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for keeping him here at this late hour. I am not sure that, if the situation were reversed and I were the Minister, I would automatically be well disposed to pleas for help made to me at this time in the morning.

I wish to speak about the problems faced by former textile areas that are eligible for benefit from the European Regional Development Fund. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak at last about this important matter. I say "at last" because not only have I applied unsuccessfully for an Adjournment debate in the past five weeks, but the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), whom I am pleased to see here, has been equally unsuccessful in such applications. Questions from me and from my hon. Friends the Members for Halifax (Mr. Galley) and for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) put down to the Department of the Environment were transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry, which then transferred them back to the Department of the Environment. I was beginning to despair.

The ERDF was established in 1975 as an instrument of European Community regional policy to help to correct regional economic imbalances, arising in particular from agricultural preponderance, industrial change and structural unemployment. In the United Kingdom, regional problems arise mainly from industrial obsolescence, geographical remoteness, and the need to replace outworn infrastructure. Assistance given by the fund falls under two main headings — grants for industrial, handicraft or service activities and grants for infrastructure works carried out wholly or in part by local and public authorities.

EEC regulation 219/84, which covers the textile measure, adds demolition and redevelopment of disused industrial sites to the list of eligible activities. The guiding principle behind the allocation of finance from the European Community is that it should provide an additional element to the activities undertaken by member states. The term "additionality" can be viewed in two ways. The Community assistance should be additional to the level of spending already undertaken at national level, or the Community aid should enable additional schemes to be carried out that would not have taken place without Community funding.

As a result of discussions on the textile measure, the Commission received assurances from the Government that expenditure on the reconversion of premises and the reclamation of derelict land, financed by ERDF grants, would allow local authorities to extend their expenditure limits by an amount equal to the ERDF aid without penalty.

The Government, in response to numerous approaches on the matter, maintain that anticipated ERDF receipts are taken into account in setting the levels of local government spending, which are, therefore, higher than they would be without those receipts. However, that is never quantified.

I share the concern of the Association of District Councils about the Government's position and, like the association, I believe that ERDF aid should be genuinely additional to other resources and that the degree of additionality must be clearly visible. I believe that the Government's present practice is unfair and illogical and affects areas such as Hyndburn detrimentally. If a local authority is eligible under the non-quota textile measure and receives a grant from ERDF, no corresponding increase is permitted in its capital allocation.

Although the estimated receipts from ERDF are apparently taken into account when the national aggregate for local government expenditure is determined, no allowance is made for the fact that only a prescribed number of authorities are going to be eligible to receive ERDF grants when annual capital allocations are made to individual authorities. Consequently, the potential benefit of ERDF grants in terms of increased capital spending ability, is spread over all United Kingdom authorities rather than directed solely towards those areas that the EEC, and presumably the Government, intend to assist because of their serious economic problems. In that sense, therefore, there is no additionality at local level.

The potential benefit, therefore, of additional investment in economic revitalisation of particular areas is lost, the additional finance being dissipated throughout the nation to needy and not so needy authorities alike, rather than being allocated specifically to the authorities which are judged, by reason of the textile measure, to need it. That seems to be illogical, and I cannot believe that the Government intend to penalise us in that way.

The only financial benefit a textile authority receives is on revenue, since it will be paying interest on only 50 per cent. of the total cost if a grant is received. However, in terms of tangible works to revitalise the local economy, there is no net gain in the amount of work the authority can afford to carry out. That should be, and surely is, the primary aim of the textile measure. The present measure severely limits the number and sizes of schemes that can be financed, with or without ERDF assistance and economic benefits are lost.

The effect of those constraints is serious for Hyndburn and the other textile closure area authorities involved. Take-up under the textile measure is currently biased towards those authorities that are fortunate enough to be designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978, since that gives them substantial capital allocations. Hyndburn, despite repeated requests and a strong case, has no such status and is experiencing real difficulties in putting forward eligible schemes, given the current capital expenditure controls.

Mill conversion schemes, as envisaged by the measure, are generally out of the main stream of many authorities' capital programmes. Hence, accommodating such a scheme to obtain grant may be difficult because of the scale of expenditure involved, or it can mean deferring or deleting another scheme. The grants may therefore only create a substitution effect.

Authorities are also seriously concerned that the original intentions for the grant moneys are not being maintained in an effort to distribute the finance available in the time scale available. Although schemes of environmental improvement can be important, they were clearly stated to be a low priority. The amount of grant being allocated to such schemes appears to be substantial and that must be attributable to the lack of suitable mill conversion schemes being put forward. It is of concern that the main objective of the measure is apparently not being realised, since one of the major problems in those

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areas is the lack of modern, efficient industrial buildings and the substantial numbers of under-used former textile mills.

I am concerned that many grants under the non-quota textile measure are gravitating to the inner urban area authorities, particularly programme authorities, and are being allocated, in a number of instances, to schemes offering less economic benefit.

My local authority of Hyndburn feels strongly that the system should be changed soon. I share its view that the amount included in local government expenditure for ERDF receipts should be eliminated from that calculation and a system introduced which would direct the grant receipts only to those authorities that are eligible.

As the Government know what assumptions are made about ERDF receipts, when they determine the national total for the block five—the other services block—of the capital allocation, I would have thought that it would be a simple matter to isolate that element from the rest of block five. It would then be possible to issue approvals for additional capital allocations, specific to approvals given to local authorities for ERDF schemes. That is the system currently employed for the urban programme, urban development grants and derelict land grants. If an authority receives grant, it also receives the necessary allocation to cover that grant. It would be acceptable for only the EEC grant element to receive an additional capital allocation, thus achieving the additionality that authorities are seeking. The Department of the Environment administers non-quota grants and the process would appear to be more straightforward than for quota grants.

If deemed necessary, as with derelict land grants, the capital allocation could be made after a return of expenditure is submitted at the end of a financial year because formal approval of allocation is retrospective. That would overcome the problem of divergence between planned and actual expenditure.

The logic of such a system is extremely powerful. If such systems are felt to be adequate for allocating grant under the urban programme and derelict land grants, which involve substantial sums, there seems to be a strong case for a similar system to be introduced to deal with ERDF grants. It seems odd that ERDF grants continue to be treated as a general benefit vis-a-vis capital allocations, whereas other aid to tackle urban obsolescence and economic decline is excluded and targeted on precisely those authorities that need it.

As a possible alternative, that proportion of the national allocation that relates to ERDF grants could be reserved for distribution to eligible authorities by certain criteria before the remainder is divided among other authorities. That method would be less accurate and more cumbersome than the first, but would still be preferable to the present arrangements.

In previous correspondence or meetings, Ministers have indicated a reluctance to reduce the allocations to the local authority associations, since there is a general desire to allow the associations to decide their own priorities. As that freedom does not extend to key expenditure programmes, such as the urban programme, it is somewhat difficult to accept that the Government would in any way create a precedent by removing ERDF grants.

The Minister scarcely needs to be reminded of the dramatic decline in the textile industries, from which stems much of our urban decay. I am sure that he recognises the concern of the local authorities involved and their commitment to local industries and employment.

Like other textile closure areas of Lancashire, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire, Hyndburn covers an area which is proud of its record of self-reliance and productivity. ERDF, properly allocated, would greatly help our efforts to revitalise local industry and stand firmly on our feet once again. Hyndburn has the will, the expertise and the capacity to augment the role of the Government and the EEC in economic recovery, but we need to be given a realistic opportunity to do so.

I am grateful to the Government for the extra money that Hyndburn has received for housing, derelict land and for the town centre redevelopment, but we can spend wisely in Hyndburn every pound that we receive. I urge the Minister to act to change the present system of ERDF allocation so that we benefit fully from it.

We are especially concerned that the Government's attitude as seen by the European Commission, may discourage the EEC from directing special assistance in future to the needy regions of the United Kingdom. That would be a tragedy for many areas, not least for Hyndburn.

4.24 am

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I am pleased to speak in this debate, and I certainly note the endeavours of the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) to achieve a debate on this subject for a considerable time. He has co-ordinated Members of Parliament covered by the non-textile measures which apply not only to Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Yorkshire, but to other areas. Hon. Members representing those areas are equally worried about the problems of the ERDF non-quota measures as hon. Members present. I am sure that it is only the early hours of the morning that have prevented others from being present.

I wondered which Minister would reply and I am pleased that it is the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, because he will listen to our case and, if he cannot answer all our points because the matter covers more than one Department, he will have them considered fairly. Even if the answer is not favourable, they will be responded to. Obviously, we hope that the response will be favourable.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the problem of tabling questions on this subject. There is a tendency to transfer them from one Department to another. Not only is the DTI involved but the Department of the Environment and the Treasury, which likes to stick its fingers into all Departments. That only makes the matter more complex. In addition, the fund originates from the EC, so that that further complicates the matter.

The two problems are the complexity of getting schemes approved and money committed for them, and additionality. The DOE is responsible for the administration of non-quota measures for the infrastructure. Only last week the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), in a written answer, made it clear that, of the £21,529,000 originally available under non-quota measures, £11,218,235 is still to be allocated and that the measures expire in 1989. There is grave anxiety that approvals are taking so long.

I intended to make many of the points made by the hon. Gentleman and certainly I agree with most of his remarks. Points of difference would be only minor. It is important to recognise the joint political approach and great similarity of view on this subject in all the areas affected.

If the EC makes funds available, clearly they are additional resources. It is important to be clear that they are not a substitute for resources that the Government would have made available in any event. The hon. Gentleman rightly made that important point, and I intend to spend some time on it.

It is difficult to get schemes approved. A scheme in my constituency relates to Slaters terrace, which is on the Leeds-Liverpool canal. It is a terrace of cottages overlooking the canal which was built at the end of the 18th century when the canal was built. It is standing derelict. It was visited on 23 April last year — St. George's day—by Prince Charles; and Rod Hackney of Hackney Associates has produced a report which refers to what is known in Burnley as the "weavers' triangle". It is an area of great importance in the industrial development of this country. Britain's wealth in the last century, in the great industrial revolution, was based on the growth of the cotton industry and on the coal and other natural resources in the area. That revolution has greatly changed civilisation throughout the world. Lancashire played an important role in the early stages of that revolution.

We have been waiting for a decision on Slaters terrace for some considerable time and we are still awaiting that decision. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), said only recently that that item was still on ice following his inquiries. At one time Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Blackburn were dominated by the old large cotton mills, with their chimneys belching out smoke. That has completely changed. There are still some mills working, but the position is now very different from that which even I knew as a boy when I was evacuated to Burnley during the war to my mother's home town which she had had to leave during the recession in the 1930s. We want to see those areas thrive once again.

In a letter sent by Burnley borough council to the Association of District Councils on 27 November 1985 —and I have been pursuing the issue since then, so this dates back some time now — Mr. Brian Whittle explained to Gordon McCartney, the secretary of the ADC, that he would be aware that Burnley borough council was

"one of several Districts in the North West which together with a number of Metropolitan Boroughs, are eligible for ERDF assistance under the Non-Quota Textile Closure Area measure. Growing concern has been expressed that, because of the Government's controls over capital and revenue spending, the take-up of assistance available under this measure has been seriously inhibited."

Mr. Whittle went on to refer to the ADC's economic document to which the hon. Member for Hyndburn referred. That sets out the ADC's view on additionality. As that point has already been dealt with, I do not intend to go into detail on it again. However, the document makes it clear that the ADC's view is the same as that expressed in the debate tonight, and therefore that view has a considerable measure of broad support.

On 3 July 1986 I received a letter about a delegation meeting the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning. That delegation discussed the problems of additionality. The hon. Member for Hyndburn was also fully involved in that process.

At that stage, the council stressed a particular problem of additionality affecting Burnley. In the last paragraph of his letter to me dated 3 July 1986, Mr. Whittle states:

"The Council was recently informed that the provision of the industrial units at Queen Street Mill would qualify for grant assistance from the ERDF Non-Quota Sector in the sum of £85,223. However, as a certain element of this grant relates to works already grant aided under the Industrial and Commercial Urban Programme, the sum of £53,000 will need to be returned to the Department of the Environment. Furthermore, the Department of the Environment is not prepared to transfer this sum to other Urban Programme Schemes".

The letter then gives some of the other schemes that have been rejected.

Having been able to get additional resources from Europe, it seems that, as the Government do not have sufficient money to approve all of Burnley's urban programme submissions, they should at least allow funds to be switched among those which have been rejected, but no, the money has to go back to the Department.

Lancashire Enterprises Ltd. raised the issue with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 18 September. Its letter says:

"It is understood unofficially that it is likely to be October/November before an announcement is made. I am therefore writing to you with the unanimous support of the Directors of the Company and with all party support from the County Council to ask, in the light of the Government's knowledge of the way in which LEL is funded and the acceptance, referred to in your letter, that companies appropriate to the situation should be encouraged, that LEL should be immediately freed from the general freeze".

The letter says that the company was awaiting approval for £1,712,542 worth of schemes. It says that they are in line with the Government's priorities as they are designed to encourage the development and expansion of small firms. One of those schemes would have lapsed if other sources of funding had not been found. Projects have been put in jeopardy, however, and that has job implications.

The Chief Secretary finally sent a reply saying that it was no longer a Treasury problem and that it was now with the Department of the Environment. The hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen got involved and tried to push the schemes along, but they were simply pushed from one Department to another. They still have not been sorted out and we are within sight of the end of the financial year.

I have a mass of correspondence which shows the difficulties that Lancashire county council and Burnley borough council have had. I know that the same is true of Hyndburn, Pendle and other areas. In its most recent document, the Association of District Councils, which is not Labour dominated, repeats the principles of additionality. The latest information we have is that the delays are due to the lawyers in the EEC. So the ball is back in Europe. The EEC, on the other hand, tell us that the British Government are at fault and that it is not Europe's problem. The matter has been raised with the MEP for Lancashire, East, Mike Hindley, who has taken it up.

We have different Government Departments blaming each other, the Government blaiming the EEC and the EEC blaiming the Government. The situation is defeating the whole object of the fund. We deserve assistance. We have overcome many of the problems that have arisen

[Mr. Peter Pike]

locally because of the decline of industries in the Lancashire area. We have fought to survive. We do not expect everything to be done for us.

I hope that as a result of this debate the Government will take the necessary action to abolish the unfair principle of additionality as it is operated now and will ensure that steps are taken to deal more speedily with applications when they are made, from wherever in the country they come. I hope that the Minister will give us a ray of hope for the future.

4.42 am

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Giles Shaw): I wish at the outset to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on raising these issues, and I assure him that whatever the time, be it 1.30, 3.30 or any hour of the night, it is a pleasure to respond to a debate which he has initiated. I assure him that there is no question of awkwardness in having a ministerial colleague here at this hour on a matter of this importance.

I appreciated the contribution of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). My hon. Friend and the hon. Member, representing Lancashire seats, will recognise, having a Yorkshire Member responding to them, that there is much more about which we agree than disagree when it comes to dealing with problems associated with areas of textile decline.

But the issue which my hon. Friend has raised supersedes the question of textile decline areas. He and the hon. Member for Burnley have raised the subject of additionality, which is a feature of the policy currently applied in particular in local government capital expenditure. It spreads right across local authorities, all of which benefit in many ways from the ERDF set up by the European Community.

My hon. Friend will recognise that the essential policy is a matter of local authority expenditure and that that is primarily a matter for the Secretary of State for the Department of the Environment. Indeed, my hon. Friend and the hon. Member might look somewhat charitably on my appearance here to answer a debate the major component of which has been a discussion about local authority financing, for which I have no ministerial responsibility.

But the fact that my hon. Friend has raised problems facing the European regional development fund in non-quota former textile areas I hope still entitles me to respond to the points raised in the debate, certainly as they affect directly the operation of my Department's responsibilities in the textile area or former textile area schemes which are under discussion.

I shall first address the central issue of additionality. Having made it clear that the central Department which deals with this issue is the Department of the Environment, my first task is to say that I shall see to it that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is fully apprised of the views expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn and by the hon. Member for Burnley. I know from my direct involvement with the Department of the Environment some little time ago of the burning issues which are raised on additionality in relation to capital expenditure programmes. This has been reviewed from time to time, and I think that my hon. Friend is well aware of that. Indeed, it was reviewed last year when there were discussions between the Government and local government representatives on possible routes through what is clearly seen as a major bone of contention.

The Government's view is clear. It is clear that local authority expenditure is a very large slice of total public expenditure. I am sure that my hon. Friend, although he did not say it, would subscribe to the importance of containing public expenditure as a matter of national economic management or at least being able to assess it in relation to what the economy can legitimately be said to afford. It follows, therefore, that when discussions are held on European schemes, there is inevitably an element of potential double counting. They are schemes which are well known in advance and by which local authorities—I am sure that those hon. Members who are present would agree that each of theirs is one such authority—are able to take into account some of the benefits that would arise in their areas, should they be eligible for certain receipts from the European regional development fund. In essence, the Government have been seeking for some years to ensure that the regional development funds are taken into account when local authority capital expenditure programmes are set and, therefore, have already been taken on board when the final decisions are taken on the total local authority spend through the rate support grant system.

During the discussions last year, there was a proposition that an amount sliced off the top of the other services block might be allocated as the payment for ERDF money and that that would be a possible formula. But, as I think my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn and the hon. Member for Burnley recognise, that was not found acceptable in the discussions between the Government and the local authority. Therefore, the situation remains that expected receipts for the ERDF are taken into account when capital allocations are set. So long as that is the case, if separate sums are available, there would obviously be a form of double accounting.

I accept that the problem cannot be allowed to rest there. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has agreed that this issue should be addressed in the discussions on the Green Paper on local authority financing, which he published last autumn. I hope that my hon. Friend will take heart from the fact that, because there is a major disagreement about the allocation and additionality consequences of the ERDF receipts, this matter should be so addressed. The discussions on the Green Paper, which was published last year under the title "Paying for Local Government", deal with that issue. I have little doubt that local authority associations and individual authorities will cover in their responses this issue of additionality which has caused such concern for so long.

Local authority associations play a part in the decisions on the size of the capital allocations. My hon. Friend will know that after consultations the final decision on the capital allocations is made. Therefore the present policy of determining the total capital allocation, when those allocations come before my hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment for final decision, reflects the collective view of local authorities.

I accept that there are many areas in the country where the local authorities may not feel that the collective

decision and national determination adequately reflect what they want to do in the areas that are affected by industrial decline.

I have broadly referred to the issue of additionality and I shall now turn to the question of dealing with the areas of decline. Those hon. Members who are present have raised the issue of additionality in the context of their desire that funds be made available to assist the regeneration of areas that are suffering as a result of the decline of the traditional industries in their areas.

There are aspects of the ERDF that are directly the responsibility of my Department, that is the use of funds to assist industries in the specific areas, defined by the ERDF as being non-quota measures, that have been affected by the decline of textiles, shipbuilding, steel and so on. My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn and the hon. Member for Burnley are aware of that.

In recent times there has been much interest in making use of the additional opportunities for expenditure and additional funding made available by the European Community. There has been a feeling that the northern parts of the United Kingdom do not receive a sufficient amount to deal with the declining traditional industries such as textiles. I assure my hon. Friend that it is the Government's determination to ensure that, although we are one of the wealthier nations in relation to the entire Community, we fight firmly for our share of additional funds for assisted areas, especially those suffering structural decline.

As the Community has enlarged and taken in countries in the south, there is a need for the maximum degree of effort to ensure that the northern parts of the Community are considered with equal intensity as those countries in the south. However, it must be accepted that there is an obvious difference between the quality of the infrastructure and industrial activity in those countries compared with the countries in the north of the Community.

The ERDF non-quota measures provide the opportunity to maximise our efforts. The total amount that has been spent through non-quota measures to alleviate problems in the textile areas is £134 million. The relief for textile areas is part of the composite policy to assist shipbuilding and steel areas. The measures cover both aid to small firms and assistance to improve the physical environment.

My Department is the lead Department in deciding how those measures are administered in the areas represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn and the hon. Member for Burnley. Out of the £134 million the Government have provided £74 million. It is a characteristic of the schemes that there must be a national as well as a community commitment to spend money on the problem. My hon. Friend made it clear that the textile areas in question are not just the parts of Lancashire represented by the hon. Member for Burnley, but all of Northern Ireland, Tayside, parts of west Yorkshire other parts of Lancashire and greater Manchester.

The measures for small firms were announced as a programme that would run for five years, but it was hoped that the funds would be taken up at a quicker rate than that. In some instances this has been the position. We expect that we shall be able to deliver the full amount of non-quota aid to the areas concerned well before the end of the programme.

I am aware that there have been variations in some of the textile areas, including parts of Lancashire. When there is an apparent underspend — on for example, the business improvement services scheme, which is part of the Department's repertoire of assistance — the issue arises of possible switches from one location to another. This arises when there are underspends in one area and overspends, or higher demand, in others. The Manchester area is one example. There has been a keenness to see that there is a redistribution between Manchester and Lancashire, and a decision must be made at a time when we know that there will be an under-expenditure. My latest appraisal is that there is likely to be one, and I hope very much, therefore, that we can make a transfer. It will probably happen within the next six months, and I shall be considering carefully the benefits that that can bring to areas such as the one that is represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn. I am aware that certain projects have been put on ice pending clarification of whether there would be room within the scheme to allow further expenditure to take place. I give my hon. Friend the assurance that it is not a matter of saying that there are no further funds available within Lancashire to deal with textile issues. The prospects of transfer — we have to make application to the Commission — will be taken into consideration. I hope that I shall be able to make further pronouncements in a few months' time when we are certain about what the level of under-expenditure will be.

That is a reference to the expenditure that we hope to be able to make under the Department of Trade and Industry's promise, but there are infrastructural expenditures as well. I recognise that infrastructure is as important in improving the industrial environment as it is in improving the social environment. The hon. Member for Burnley has referred to Slaters terrace, which is an example, at least in part, of an improved infrastructure project. It is a demonstration of the importance of dealing with the historic consequences of the textile industry.

We have not yet decided whether we shall be able to extend the operation of BIS in more general terms. It is fairly clear from the take-up of the schemes, however, that they are of real value in providing assistance to smaller firms. The scheme is designed to ensure that the firms that are assisted are not textile firms. It embraces firms that need assistance to diversify out of textiles or to provide increased job opportunities and improved capital investment while a firm trades in other ways.

There is a real need to continue to provide assistance of this sort in textile areas, and we shall be examining closely the future of the schemes to ensure that they are refined in the light of recent experience. The schemes have attracted a great deal of support and my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman can rest assured that we shall examine closely the way in which they have been used. Should there be underspend, we shall be seeking to redistribute moneys to other applicants.

Mr. Pike: I am sure that we all welcome the measures that the Minister is describing and that we are not ungrateful for them. If we are looking for improvement, however, will he consult the authorities that are involved in the running of them? Will he seek their views on what is going wrong?

Mr. Shaw: It is essential that we gain all the information possible from those who are affected directly, such as industries and companies, and from those who should have a say in the way in which their areas are developed.

[Mr. Shaw]

I must make a distinction between Department of Trade and Industry funding and infrastructure funding. The latter is exclusively a local authority matter whereas DTI assistances are directed through my Department solely for the use of companies. Nevertheless, I accept the point that in areas of structural decline it is important that local authorities should consider that the schemes that we provide under the heading — particularly as it is European-funded—are acceptable.

Other aspects of textile structural assistance were raised, such as the whole amount of money, how it is made up, and whether it is refined and directed accurately. My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn was critical. In his view, an insufficient amount reached the most affected areas. He was concerned that there would be a dissipation of assistance that is primarily directed towards industrial development in areas affected by structural decline and that it might find its way too much into inner urban area schemes that do not have that component. As the hon. Member for Burnley said, there are differences of view about whether money should be spent on one or the other. I fear to say, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn said, that this is where we cannot always meet what local authorities wish to do.

My concern and that of my hon. Friend and the hon. Member is to see that the schemes that relate to industrial activity and the generation of new industrial activity, such as development grants and assisted area status grant, combine with the ERDF to provide proper chance for new industrial employment developments in areas affected by structural decline. Therefore, I am less involved with the infrastructure or urban centre regeneration issues. Primarily, they are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and, indeed, for the local authorities concerned.

In addition to schemes funded under the ERDF, many schemes on the ground relate directly to joint endeavours in inner city areas. One thinks of the city action groups and the urban development corporations that have been established in some parts of Manchester and, indeed, the big development areas of Merseyside and Salford and so on, in which there is a major industrial generation as well as a major infrastructure improvement and regeneration of urban centres.

I have taken on board the remarks made by my hon. Friend expressing his concern about additionality. Although attempts have been made to resolve the matter between Government and local authorities, they have not yet borne fruit. The issue is part of the review of local authority financing as a whole. With the release of the Green Paper last year, my hon. Friend can at least take some comfort from the fact that the issue is being centrally exposed once again and, I hope, will be resolved.

On the aspects affecting the Department of Trade and Industry using this fund, I give an assurance that we certainly shall examine the possibility of redistribution from those parts of the north-west where underspends are taking place and whether those projects that are eligible, either in Hyndburn or Burnley, can still be put forward on the ground that there may well be further funds from such a redistribution. I assure my hon. Friend that I accept fully the need to ensure that there is a many-faceted approach to the areas that have suffered from structural decline. With the policies that the ERDF provides and the policies that we have put in place in other ways to assist the areas, I am sure that there will be a lot of opportunity for growth and jobs in the area.

I remind my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Burnley that, although there has been massive decline in the textile industry over many years, the actual industry that remains today is a massively successful performer. My hon. Friend will be aware that textiles now provide about 9 per cent. of manufacturing employment. Their track record in relation to performance in export markets—I think £3 billion was the last figure for the full year, 1986 — is a major achievement. Many British companies, operating either in Lancashire or, dare I say it, in west Yorkshire, are now able to look to the future with considerable confidence.

Rillington Bypass

5.4 am

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): The subject of my Adjournment debate is not particularly contentious, but it is important to many of my constituents.

The need for a bypass round the village of Rillington has been growing for a long time. The idea was first floated in the early 1970s when Rillington was part of the constituency of Howden. Local people became very much aware of the increasing amount of traffic passing along the A64, which goes right through the village. I understand that the national trunk road programme is being reviewed. This, therefore, seems to be a good opportunity to bring the subject of a bypass round Rillington to the notice of both the Minister and those who are involved in the decision-making process.

As far back as February 1973 a resident wrote to the then hon. Member for Howden now the hon. Member for Boothberry—about the possibility of a bypass. At that time the Rillington and Norton areas formed the northern section of the Howden constituency. Subsequently they became part of the Ryedale constituency. However, the hon. Member for Boothberry (Sir P. Bryan), replied to my constituent as follows:

"I do agree with you that with the coming of bypasses for Tadcaster, York and Malton this road"—

that is the A64—

"will be increasingly used, and I think the time has come to put pressure on the authorities for a bypass for Rillington."

I echo the hon. Gentleman's words. After a lapse of 14 years I certainly wish to support the pleas of the people of Rillington.

The major problem facing the village—a large one that could be regarded as the key village in the district of Ryedale because it is still expanding on both sides of the trunk road—is that there is an ever-increasing volume of traffic, much of it heavy lorries, passing through to York and west Yorkshire in one direction and to the east coast in the other direction.

The general needs for a bypass arise from this factor. They are common to all places that seek a bypass. They are noise, the hazard to pedestrians—both young and old—and the damage done to property that was not built to withstand 20th century vibrations and exhaust emissions.

The provision of traffic lights in 1982 at a very busy crossroads provided some kind of cosmetic surgery and certainly enabled residents to cross the road to the various major buildings and establishments in the village—the parish church, the local inn and the village hall—in far greater safety. It is quite a busy village street. A few yards further away are two village stores, one of which is much frequented since it also houses the local post office. Beyond them, some 100 yards down the road, is Rillington village school.

Along the main part of the trunk road there are business premises, a variety of shops, a cafe and a doctor's surgery, all of which can be a potential hazard to the free flow of traffic on what is undoubtedly a busy and much used main road. Since the A64 virtually divides the village in half, the dangers to the local population are on the increase.

An important factor that should not be forgotten when looking at the dangers caused by the existing road is the blind S-bend just beyond the crossroads to the north of the village. In the 1960s three teenagers were killed here when an articulated lorry jack-knifed in the path of oncoming holiday traffic. There have been numerous other accidents on this bad bend. A man who had been pursued all the way from Leeds by the police crashed on this part of the road. Three years ago, in the early hours of the morning, one of the many articulated lorries that was passing through the village lost control on the bend and shed its load in the car park of the Coach and Horses inn, demolishing a brick built bottle store. It could easily have smashed into the public house.

Along the length of the village there are six side roads which join the main trunk road, plus eight gateways, 65 private drives to residents' homes and three garages. In addition, four bus stops are located in one direction and three in the other. All these are essential to the village, but each in its own different way adds to the congestion on the through road. One local councillor believes that if the life of the village is to be preserved the through traffic needs to be taken out of the village.

There is a further point. The neighbouring village of Scagglethorpe has been provided with a bypass in the last six months—to the great advantage of its community—because local people realised that the bends in the road at Scagglethorpe would cause danger to fast moving traffic leaving the new bypass at Malton. Local pressure helped to bring about the improvement to this part of the A64.

Local viewpoints should be a consideration in the case of Rillington, too. It is interesting to note that the Malton bypass, which was opened in 1978 and which brings traffic on to the Rillington section of the A64, has recently had to have major repairs done to it. On account of the amount of traffic, the road — which was planned to have a lifetime of some 20 years—has already shown signs of deterioration. It cost nearly £2 million to repair that road. The volume and size of the vehicles on the road had been seriously under-estimated by the authorities when they planned the bypass. It is estimated that at peak times some 8,000 vehicles make their way to the east coast daily, and the road has proved to be quite unable to take the strain of such heavy use.

All of those vehicles going to the coast must pass through Rillington. The village is now the sole major conurbation through which the trunk road passes before reaching the outskirts of Scarborough. Furthermore, one can travel from York or Pickering without encountering any speed restrictions until one comes into Rillington. In spite of the traffic lights, some vehicles still traverse the village in excess of the speed limit of 40 mph.

One of the excuses in the past for the non-provision of a bypass has been lack of funding. However, such strictures have not applied equally in all places. Last summer, for example, a bypass on the A64 further down the road at Seamer was approved and a start was made on the preliminary work. One might therefore naturally suppose that the problems that were suffered by Seamer were greater than those suffered by Rillington. However, that is not the case because, while all the traffic bound for the coast must pass through Rillington, it does not have to go through Seamer. Before reaching Seamer the A64 divides at the Staxton roundabout and the traffic either turns towards Seamer and Scarborough or southwards towards Filey and Bridlington. These latter towns and areas include various tourist attractions such as caravan and camp sites, and therefore take a great deal of the traffic flow. If Seamer, which sees substantially fewer

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vehicles going through its streets, can be awarded a bypass, it seems that Rillington, which has carried traffic north and south of the Staxton bypass, should certainly be regarded on equal terms.

I appreciate that exact comparisons of towns are not always easy to make, but it seems a little odd that a case can be made for Seamer but not for Rillington, which obviously endures a much heavier traffic flow.

While the detailed siting of the bypass is not for consideration here, in the view of the local parish council it would best be laid to the south of the A64. Care would need to be taken with the area, including a deer park, which was laid out by the renowned Capability Brown. An ancient monument—perhaps the site of a former village—need not be interfered with and since much, though not all, of the land is poor, sandy soil the use of agricultural land would not be excessive. Compensation would be necessary for local farmers on whose land the bypass would be constructed.

The parish council took a unanimous decision to support the provision of a bypass and the majority of the residents of Rillington would be happy to see it built. A report in the local newspaper at the end of November expressed concern about traders and shops in the village. This point ought naturally to be considered, but there is an interesting corollary. In some places where a village or town has been provided with a bypass the local environment, freed from the constant flow of traffic thundering by, has been enhanced and shopping has been made easier and much more pleasurable. I see no reason why this should not apply to our very pleasant village of Rillington.

Last week I asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he had any plans for the establishment of a bypass around our North Yorkshire village of Rillington. His reply, though brief, was encouraging and I shall quote it. He said:

"A review of the road programme is under way. The results will be published in the spring. I cannot comment before then."—[*Official Report*, 20 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. *636*.]

I know and the Minister knows that the vernal equinox is past. Whatever the weather may be like, spring has officially begun. Therefore, on behalf of the people of Rillington I await the Minister's reply with interest and hopeful anticipation.

5.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I am delighted to be here. Actually, I am not, but I shall say that I am delighted to be here to answer the hon. Lady the Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) at this hour of the morning.

I answered the hon. Lady's question on Friday. Rillington parish council wrote to the Department in February and I think we responded to that letter and gave roughly the same answer, perhaps slightly expanded, as the answer that we gave the hon. Lady. We noted the parish council's views and the hon. Lady's views.

If I may say so gently, what the hon. Lady has said to the House might just as easily have been given straight to her local newspaper. She knows that we have to announce the roads review in one go and it would be wrong to suggest that each possible scheme for inclusion in that review could be given either in an Adjournment debate or in a Consolidated Fund debate. If that were the case, it would probably be one scheme a week for the two years between announcements of reviews.

The hon. Lady has taken us down part of the A64 in a sort of MP's motoring tour or a pedestrian MP's walk through the post offices. Clearly, the hon. Lady made valuable points about the benefits of bypasses. She paid generous tribute to her predecessor for part of her constituency before reorganisation.

I know that my hon. Friend who is now the Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) was involved in Rillington and talked to me about it on previous occasions. He also talked about his work in Malton and about some of the other bypasses. I must confess to a family link, because for many years one of my cousins was the Member of Parliament for Thirsk and Malton and ended up as Father of the House.

The hon. Lady will understand if I do not give any more detailed information about the road prospects of Rillington. She knows that we are considering them. I shall now speak more generally.

Earlier today — if that is the right parliamentary expression for something that happened nearly 24 hours ago—I went up past Yorkshire to Durham and opened a small industrial access road at Aycliffe. It is a road that involved small-scale spending. It is not a trunk road and was built using taxpayers' money, county council money and help from the development corporation. It will take through traffic away from residential areas. In essence, that is what bypasses are about.

I went on through various villages where through traffic was travelling too fast and saw the excellent work carried out by the surveyor and his staff in Durham. I am sure the same thing applies in Yorkshire. By going in for low-cost engineering, the county surveyor has been able to reduce traffic speeds without having to rely on police officers waiting behind every lamp post.

The self-enforcing measures of traffic engineering make a great difference to the number of casualties on our roads. I will not describe as accidents all the injuries and deaths on the roads, because many of them are predictable. The hon. Lady referred to the tragedy of a jack-knifed lorry and also to a person who was trying to get away from the police. There is an obligation to pay as much attention to low-cost engineering, including small scale bypasses, where the elderly and children are moving across residential or through roads, whether in a community of 800 people or in the inner cities where tens of thousands are going about the streets.

On my tour I went on to Bishop Auckland. By taking the through traffic out of the main traffic area there, the shopping facilities regenerated. The hon. Lady referred to some fears in Rillington about what might happen if a bypass comes. I can confirm that most people find overall benefit by having the through traffic out.

I then went on to Durham itself, where people still regale visitors with stories of the policeman sitting in his box below the cathedral and getting traffic from Silver street around the corner. In Durham they had a special hand signal—I do not know how this will go down in the *Official Report*—which meant, "I intend to go around you, Mr. Policeman, and go up the road just to your right or left," depending on the way you looked at it. All these

things that I have seen in Durham and in most counties do lead to reductions in casualties and to a greater chance of economic prosperity.

I want to say something — without being unnecessarily partisan—about why some bypasses have not been brought forward as fast as others. The hon. Lady rightly referred to a shortage of money. In the period 1974 to 1979, national money for new roads was cut exactly in half in real terms. That was not a period when the Labour party ruled by itself; it was also the time of the understanding with the Liberal party. Since 1979 it has been possible to add funds to national road spending—from which funds for a Rillington bypass would come, if it is added to the national roads programme.

It is always possible for some Opposition Members to say—I acknowledge that the hon. Lady does not say this—that they believe in infrastructure spending. The plain truth is that the infrastructure spending — the Prime Minister and I call that roads and bridges—has increased under this Government and had decreased under the previous Government. Many bypasses which had been in the programme, and on which very little work had been done up to 1979, were shelved because there was too much work to be done and not enough money. Since then we have managed to pull back most of the shelved schemes, and that has been greatly appreciated by many communities.

The hon. Lady raised the importance of environmental relief that can be given by a bypass in Rillington. Some people say that no more roads should be built and that people should move to the trains. This is undemocratic and an example of losing sight of equality of opportunity. Most people driving in cars, especially in the cities, are male and white. Many people become so well-off that they can afford to give up their cars, especially if they can live within walking distance of a station.

But many other people, such as the low-paid — of whom there are many in the hon. Lady's constituency—women and members of minority groups in the inner cities, need or wish to have a car. Of the more than 3 million learner drivers in this country, 2 million are women, and many of them want to have cars and to be able to drive around.

It was well said by a woman at the Friends of the Earth meeting that I went to on Thursday that it is all very well for a well-off dependant-free male to say that cars are not necessary, but he should try being the parent of five children, having a job, doing the shopping, looking after elderly parents, and trying to be in three places at the same time. It is often convenient, in such circumstances, to be able to travel around by car, although, no matter how much one needs to be in two places at the same time, obeying the speed limit is important. I think that the hon. Lady will agree that, although one does not want to take everybody off public transport and put them unnecessarily into individual cars, one wants to make provision so that more people can have the individual mobility that a car can give.

I have talked around the important subject that the hon. Lady has raised in a way that brings in all the important issues. The north-east can get economic benefits from a better road system. In Yorkshire, and especially in Durham, the major road system is substantially better than in other parts of the country. That is a reflection of the Hailsham initiative of 25 years ago. There are still improvements to be made, and the hon. Lady drew attention to one bypass.

Economic prosperity and employment opportunities come from better communications. That does not only mean roads. As I was saying to a number of councillors today, the Channel tunnel will help more goods to be moved on the railways. It is commonly estimated that in normal terms, a freight journey of 250 miles or more is better suited to the railways than to the roads. With through rail links to the rest of the European Community, especially to the parts that lead on to the south coast of England, fewer unnecessary heavy goods may pass on our roads, with or without bypasses, and that will be generally welcome.

The second reason is the environmental improvement. The environment does not just mean protecting the countryside, although that is important. Nobody wants to cover the whole of the countryside with concrete or tarmacadam unnecessarily. There is the importance of restoring the environment in the built-up areas, whether villages such as Rillington or the thousands of households living on some of the established through routes in London and other large cities and towns.

There is also casualty reduction. As the hon. Lady will no doubt agree, a road that is purpose-built for the levels of traffic that we are experiencing, and those that we need to anticipate, can reduce road casualties dramatically. Low-cost engineering is important, and I announced a new London Transport traffic advisory leaflet earlier today giving examples of how traffic can be throttled back or kept out of residential areas. Bypasses do the same thing. Adding to our motorway network in a reasonable way between our towns and cities also helps, as does getting rid of unnecessary access to major trunk roads. Having the money to go for grade separated junctions rather than having crossroads on the main roads also helps.

Our stewardship of the country's transport interests has been pretty good. I would not claim that it is perfect, but we try to balance the priorities. When we announce the review of the roads programme, people will come to see, give or take a bit of partisanship, the benefits for local communities. There are natural consequences of our single-Member constituency system. I have no doubt that the hon. Lady would be arguing for Rillington just as much as one Member would in a multi-Member constituency, but there are advantages in having every village, every street and every block of flats represented by a Member of Parliament. Without that, the community might be looking to see who will take up the issue of the bypass.

As well as the roads and railways, it is worth saying that our public transport arrangements seem to be working pretty well. The last time that I spent more than about an hour in the hon. Lady's constituency was during the by-election campaign, when we heard about how the buses would disappear under deregulations. I am glad that she was able to share champagne in opening one of the new services. Like her, I look forward to seeing whether Rillington joins the roads review programme. I know that the hon. Lady will forgive me for not adding to the comprehensive answer that I gave her last Friday.

Devonport Dockyard

5.30 am

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): It is not my intention to repeat the various arguments that have been deployed both in favour of and against the Government's proposals for the introduction of a system of commercial management in the royal dockyards. As the House will know, I have remained very dubious. I consider the concept of agency management to be speculative and non proven since there is no comparable economic model on the scale envisaged anywhere in the world. Since the function of the Royal dockyards is to service the Royal Navy, I believe that it is wrong to pursue this particular course of action since it is the defence of the nation and the security of the realm that we are considering. Nevertheless, we must now accept that Parliament has given its approval to the Government's intentions and, indeed, vesting day for the new management structures is only days away. Only time will tell whether my fears are justified.

What is not in dispute, however, is the fact that there will be substantial job opportunity reductions over the next four years in the dockyards. During the past two years, for example, approximately 2,000 jobs have been lost at Devonport, principally through early retirement and voluntary redundancies. I wish to emphasise at this stage that most people recognised that changes were necessary in the organisation and administration of the royal dockyards and that their manpower requirements would decline. Devonport was given an enhanced status by the Government. Nevertheless, I accept that the Royal Navy now has fewer ships, those ships require fewer refits and the refits can be completed in a shorter time. However, it has already been announced that, taking the present employment level at Devonport as being 11,000 people, there will be 2,300 further job losses over the period 18 months to three years ahead and there may be a further 1,500 job opportunities lost after April 1990.

In addition, some 350 civilian jobs have been lost during the past two years in outside departments that serve the naval base and a further 200 are likely to be lost over the next three years. Further, when calculating the job losses in an area, allowance has to be made for the local multiplier effect, which it is estimated could be over 1,000 people in the Plymouth travel-to-work area. That means that in total we will almost certainly see our job opportunities in the Plymouth sub-region decline by over 5,500 by 1990 solely as a consequence of the reduced manpower requirements in Devonport dockyard. That is a pretty depressing outlook.

Sadly the story does not end there. Because of the subdued levels of economic activity that are reflected in the higher than average unemployment levels, Plymouth and east Cornwall already have assisted area status. However, if one considers the level of national financial support for assisted areas, the south-west assisted area is bottom of the league table. We have received a total of £2·2 million of regional aid since November 1984 when the new regional support measures were introduced. Expressed as a payment per head of the population, that works out at £22·89 per head in the region's development area, and £3·99 per head in the region's intermediate area, which includes Plymouth and east Cornwall.

It is interesting to note that the comparable figure for Wales, that is to say, the total support provided through regional aid, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency, is £112 million. If one considers Scotland, again taking the aggregate amount of regional aid, the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency, the equivalent figure is £180 million. However, when average weekly earning levels are considered, Scotland's average earnings are 98·8 per cent. of the national average. The comparable Welsh figure is 93·3 per cent., but those for Devon and Cornwall are 86 per cent. and 83·2 per cent. of the national average respectively.

It is right to draw the attention of the House to those two sets of figures of the extent of regional aid and average earnings to remind the Minister of the economic backcloth against which the impact of those job opportunity reductions at Devonport should be perceived.

I turn now to the action that needs to be taken, involving Government, local authorities, the European Community and statutory organisations, such as English Industrial Estates and the Manpower Services Commission to minimise the adverse effects that will undoubtedly be the result, in economic and social terms, of the projected rundown in jobs at Devonport.

I intend to list a package of measures, which merits the Government's consideration, to alleviate the sub-region's difficulties. First, I should like to emphasise above all else, the urgency of this matter. It is now two years since my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) in his former capacity as Secretary of State for Defence, published his consultative document on the future of the Royal dockyards. The implications for our region were clear then. However, although the impression was given then that initiatives would be forthcoming to minimise that impact, few tangible results have materialised. The commitment made by the former Secretary of State to release the Royal William yard for redevelopment for tourism and commercial and residential purposes is just one example of that inertia.

Of course, I recognise that, through their local authorities, local communities have a responsibility. In recent years the city of Plymouth has promoted several of its own economic initiatives. No doubt that will be confirmed subsequently. Those initiatives include new workshops and workspaces, high tech units, industrial estates, skill training initiatives, promotion, support to companies, business advice and so on. The amount that they have found is probably in excess of £11 million. In addition, there is a £3 million investment at the Plymouth airport to provide better communication links with the rest of the country. Most of these initiatives are showing signs of success.

In east Cornwall the Caradon district council in conjunction with Antony Estates is well advanced with its proposals to redevelop the 22-acre site formerly occupied by the shore base HMS Fisgard at Torpoint. About seven acres are designated for industrial purposes. The Government could immediately help Plymouth city council, Cornwall county council and the Caradon district council in two ways in their endeavours.

First, the Government could release capital receipts for investment purposes. I appreciate that this is not the direct responsibility of my hon. Friend the Minister. But I make no apology for reminding him as a member of the

Government that a Government-imposed restriction prevents those three local authorities from making a positive contribution in this way at this time.

Secondly, the Minister has departmental responsibility for this specific and immediate local authority initiative. I refer to applications which local authorities can make for financial assistance under article 15 of the European Regional Development Fund main regulation. As my hon. Friend is aware, Cornwall made two applications in January 1986: one relating to tourism and the other directly to business promotion. The financial aid sought for those two projects totals almost £1 million, but for the past 15 months the Treasury has refused to sanction those applications. That is not good enough. Furthermore, I am certain that the Plymouth city council would take advantage of this source of potential European finance once the Treasury ban was lifted. I hope that the Minister can give the House some information on this particular front when he replies this evening.

I shall mention six areas of assistance which are the prerogative of Government. First, the Minister will not be surprised if I mention the need for the creation of a Devon and Cornwall development agency. That is central and crucial to the region's economic future. I will not repeat the arguments tonight. I have explained in statistical terms that we are a sub-region characterised by higher than average levels of unemployment and significantly lower than average levels of income. We also receive lower levels of regional aid than comparable United Kingdom regions, and lack a variety of job opportunities with a consequential absence of career structures. A regional development agency could do much to redress those inherent weaknesses.

Secondly, English Industrial Estates should become involved and adopt a forward-rolling programme in the Plymouth travel-to-work area. It is suggested that land availability may be a problem in Plymouth. I am not certain of the precise position, but I can tell my hon. Friend the Minister that there is no shortage of land on the Cornish side of the river Tamar at Saltash and Torpoint. Sites are available adjacent to the Saltash bypass which is under construction and that should be a natural growth point. I have already mentioned the potential for industrial development of the Fisgard site at Torpoint.

Thirdly, I want to mention the important subject of training and re-training facilities. Clearly the Manpower Services Commission has a major responsibility in that respect. I hope that additional courses and places will be made available to take account of the changing pattern of employment opportunities in the Plymouth sub-region. There is another essentially local dimension that relates to the dockyard's training scheme. The new contractors are to take over that function, but I gather that the training school will not be fully utilised. That surely provides an opportunity for the Government to demonstrate their commitment by underwriting the cost of the additional training so that excellent facility can be used to the maximum.

Fourthly, the business improvement services scheme which is already established in Cornwall should be expanded and extended to Plymouth. The scheme is very cost effective and should be encouraged.

Fifthly, I want to advocate the establishment of a specific fund for the sub-region to provide finance for small firms. We all know the problems that smaller and often newer companies experience in raising capital for essential investment. The creation of a locally administered fund is essential if sufficient new employment opportunities are to be created significantly to offset the dockyard job losses. There are precedents for that. Special assistance has been made available by the Government in other areas where major closures have taken place largely as a result of Government action. These include Chatham, Swindon, steel and coal closure areas and the Scottish Development Agency area initiatives.

Sixthly, I must mention the question of the area's assisted area status. I believe that I am correct to state that the Plymouth travel-to-work area is the only assisted area that is currently being reviewed. I hope that the Minister will be able to put our minds at rest this evening on that specific issue by confirming our status as an assisted area.

I conclude by again stressing the urgency of the situation, which could rapidly deteriorate. We now have a period of 15 months maximum to introduce a package of measures designed to alleviate the adverse effects resulting from the reduction in manpower requirements of the Plymouth sub-region's largest single employer.

We all, of course, have an obligation to create an environment conducive to attracting suitable new industry to our areas and an obligation to stimulate existing business activities. I do not exaggerate however when I state that it is the very economic and social structure of Plymouth and east Cornwall that is at stake. That is the extent of the problem and challenge that all of us who live and work in the Plymouth and east Cornwall area currently face.

5.49 am

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): At 5.49 am, many families in Plymouth and the surrounding area are getting up and starting to go to Devonport dockyard. It seems not inappropriate, given the problems that they will face, that I should be here to draw the Government's attention to the devastating effect of their policies on the city and the sub-region.

The hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) has made a sound case, and I did not disagree with one word of what he said. His estimate of 5,500 job opportunities being lost by 1990 is realistic. It may even prove to be slightly optimistic. If we add the likely knock-on effect, we are talking of 7,000 to 8,000 job opportunities being lost in five to six years.

The effect will be massive because the job losses are concentrated on male industrial employment—the very job opportunities which are immensely hard to replace. matters were gloomy enough as a result of the damage that the Government have wrought on the Plymouth travel-to-work area because of what is happening at Devonport dockyard, but we have had to cope with the further blow of the closure of Texas Instruments.

I understand the downturn in the world economy which made Texas Instruments' decision inevitable. I pay tribute to the company, which has contributed a good deal to the city. We must not be frightened of attracting high technology firms just because of that unfortunate experience. The city has gone through this before with Rank Radio, only to see the losses there replaced by Toshiba investment. We also look forward to the opening of the Plessey factory soon.

The city council has done a good deal on an all-party basis to attract industry, and it is set to do more. Just to stand still, it is necessary to attract three or four major new

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factories each year. Now, to stand still during the next five years, that capacity to attract new investment to the city and its immediate surrounds will have to be substantially increased.

With the best will in the world and the greatest local endeavour, that cannot be done without more help and without the Government facing up to the consequences of their decisions, co-ordinating governmental activities and giving Plymouth and the surrounding area a chance to replace the jobs that are to be lost.

The hon. Gentleman is right: there was hope two years ago when the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) announced his intention to accompany what is to happen at Devonport with a series of Government actions which would anticipate the misery that was to be visited on the city in terms of job opportunities. It is fair to say that precisely nothing has come from the Government in terms of special help to offset the devastation of what is to happen to the dockyard. Not one jot extra has come to Plymouth.

The Royal William yard has been mentioned. I always thought that a certain flamboyance was not unassociated with the right hon. Member for Henley when he announced that great venture. The city council responded and was ready to co-operate until it became clear that it was being asked to take over the massive costs of retaining a historic building which, we all agree, must be retained, but with none of the supporting finance which was vital.

That project was dangled before the city, only to be shown to be a rotten apple as soon as we examined it. If that prospect is to be revived, it must be accompanied by substantial financial assistance, and the Department of the Environment should not find it too difficult to do that. It is a magnificent building that must be retained on historic grounds, but it cannot be retained by the city council alone. The potential is there, but there must be an injection of new money to make it viable.

We have been urging the Government, even within the limitations of their miserable regional policies, to take extra measures, and one that is open to Ministers to take would be to declare parts of Plymouth—and the badly affected, rather rundown area of Cattdown, which could be revived, especially the port on the Plym—some parts of Cornwall around Saltash, and even some parts of Devon, on the outskirts of the city, an enterprise zone with the advantages of being such a zone.

The Government have introduced an enterprise zone regional policy, and while there are serious criticisms of some parts of that policy, it would have given us extra help to attract industry. I have been pushing this case since the enterprise zones were announced, but without success. Indeed, there has not seemed to be the remotest possibility of the Government agreeing, though I hope tonight the Minister will prove me wrong.

Given the antipathy of the Government to the creation of new development agencies, it seems unlikely that they will do what I have no doubt must be done, which is to recognise the case for a far south-west development agency based in Cornwall. I do not believe one can argue a purely constituency case on this issue.

If the centre of gravity, so to speak, of such an agency were not in the county that was most affected by low wages and unemployment, it would not carry conviction, and the city of Plymouth must be sufficiently broad-minded to recognise that the location of the headquarters should be in Cornwall. It must embrace Plymouth, plus probably the whole or a substantial part of Devon, so that the two shire counties, and that great borough—hopefully with more of its rights restored to it—would be the focus for such a region.

It is senseless to continue with the south-west economic region as we have it at present, with parts of Bristol being closer to London than parts of Cornwall are close to Bristol. The whole region needs to be re-thought. At least the European Community recognises Devon and Cornwall as a sub-region for statistical and other purposes and has accepted that it has indigenous problems which are unrelated to the rest of the south-west region. We have seen that with the decline of the Cornish tin industry, with the difficulties of the fishing industry and with the problems of milk farming in terms of that industry being productive.

While there is no hope of the Government creating a development agency, they would be well advised to participate in the exercise which the Alliance has started in the south-west region on the specifics and mechanics of a development agency. I will send our proposals to the Minister, and I look forward to receiving his comments on them.

Other problems need tackling. The airport has been extended and that has represented a remarkable partnership between Brymon Airways and the council, and the council is to be congratulated for investing in that. In that and in other matters the council has done as much as one could reasonably expect from a district council, as it now is following the lamentable reorganisation of local government. That reorganisation was a body blow inflicted on the city of Plymouth by the right hon. Member for Henley in the early 1970s in a former ministerial incarnation.

To attract new industry, it would be a great help in selling the city's wares if we could point to a highly skilled work force. We shall have that in the short term because people will have been able to utilise the training that they have been given in the Devonport dockyard. But it will have to be replenished by the Manpower Services Commission recognising that the dockyard apprentice training school is a precious resource that will be under-utilised by Brown and Root. It is unreasonable to expect Brown and Root to take on a commitment to train more than can be justified on a likely future work load of the dockyard. But it would be reasonable for the MSC to undertake to contract out an extra 70 to 100 places in the dockyard apprentice training school to use that as a skill training resource and to give us at least the skill capacity to absorb new investment.

Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth have hesitantly, but at long last, started to collaborate to market the city's wares. A major Government grant is necessary to give that limited, but nevertheless important, grouping some of the financial support necessary for them to go out into the world markets of the United States, France, Italy the Scandinavian countries and Japan, to seek the new inward investment which the city of Plymouth must win. It is difficult to do so in competition with the Welsh and Scottish development agencies with a substantial supported export capacity and overseas marketing capacity. This modest claim is compatible with at least some aspects of the Government's regional framework.

There is no doubt that understanding the importance of the polytechnic and the role that it has played and continues to play in the sub-region is extremely important. I am worried about the cuts affecting higher education. I hope that it will be well understood in the Department of Education and Science, and through it the MSC and the Government machine generally, that the polytechnic needs to be built up. A good deal more imagination needs to be shown by the Government in helping through the royal naval engineering school at Manadon and the polytechnic. Perhaps there could be help for the research establishments—they are now under the constraints imposed on almost all the research councils — to build up the experience and expertise of Plymouth in all the maritime sciences. That would be easy to do because the marine biology laboratory has a worldwide reputation.

Those are positive suggestions, but there is one absolute fundamental — the still dominant position of the Ministry of Defence and the Property Services Agency in relation to land. I believe that another foolish decision was taken by the Ministry of Defence in holding on to Mountbatten land. It was a perfect site for a tourist development. It is folly that, when the Ministry of Defence is straining to live within its present budget the Royal Air Force, presumably predominantly, and the other armed services have been able to keep their hands on Mountbatten. I blame Ministers for not overriding the well-known instinct of the Ministry of Defence to hold what it has. Mountbatten was a prime site. If ever there was a case for allowing commercial market forces to operate to build up a tourist facility for Plymouth, it was to release Mountbatten and put it on the market. Despite that decision I hope that the Ministry of Defence will reconsider.

We must also consider the whole of the massive sea front that the dockyard has traditionally held right up the Tamar. A fundamental aspect of the new-style dockyard must be the rationalisation of its land. I already begin to detect all the old arguments about why the dockyard must hold on to what it has. We have precious little prime industrial site on deep-water moorings and some of that dockyard land must be made available, and fast, for industrial development.

The very least that we could get out of this debate is a commitment for an open study involving the city council, Devon council and if necessary, Cornwall. It is important that the city council, independent outside experts and the Minister of Defence should re-examine, in public, every part of Government land held in the city of Plymouth and whether it could be made available. That study could consider whether the land has the capacity for the development of tourism—increasingly important in the region — or whether it could be made available for industrial sites.

It is no use for that study to be undertaken privately in Whitehall, and it is no use the Ministry of Defence privately putting forward arguments as why it will not part with the land. We want an open, public inquiry, preferably with an independent chairman, in which the Minister must justify holding on to all the land. It represents the crucial key to unlock the city in the decades ahead.

The decision about Devonport has been an appalling blow for the city — I do not believe that Ministers understand how bad it is. Very well, the Ministry has the power—there is no use arguing the case—it will carry through its decision. However, I believe that agency management is fundamentally flawed and that that decision will be reversed. I believe that it will be necessary to bring this great industry together to unify and integrate the assets controlled by the Ministry of Defence. It will also be necessary to unify the work force and management that has been put out to agency management. This is for after the election. It is the minimum price — a Government-controlled PLC, operating at Devonport as an integrated, unified industrial enterprise.

I believe that it is of fundamental importance that the Government recognise the need for a development agency for Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth. It is critical that in the Government's reappraisal of what needs to be done for the city of Plymouth a greater understanding is given to how much the city has focused its cultural and social, let alone its industrial and economic life, around the Royal Navy. There is a great responsibility, in moral and historic terms, to recognise that that orientation of the city has been fundamentally changed.

Had that change been undertaken with understanding and sympathy, that transition could have occurred without the trauma, heartbreak and personal grief that now looks inevitable. If that transition were handled with sympathy and care future generations might even say that the undue dependence of the city on the dockyard was ended for the city's long-term good. There is no sign to show that the Government have anticipated the industrial damage that will be done, no sign of the Government responding to alleviate some of the damage that is being inflicted by one arm of Government, the Ministry of Defence, on the economy of the city and the sub-region.

If this debate has done anything I hope that it will concentrate Minister's minds on the fact that they have not lived up to the commitments that they undertook and the general atmosphere that they generated two years ago when the impression was given to the city that it would be helped to overcome the devastating effects of the rundown of the Devonport dockyard.

6.10 am

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): The debate illustrates one of the fundamental weaknesses of our system of government. The Ministry of Defence is responsible for about £9 billion worth of procurement and it takes decisions of an industrial nature to the exclusion of, and without any consideration of, the social consequences. In many respects, it leaves it to the Department of Trade and Industry to pick up the pieces. I have a certain sympathy with the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry for having to clear up the mess that the privatisation by the Ministry will create in Plymouth and south-east Cornwall.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): And Rosyth.

Mr. O'Neill: Indeed. Many of the arguments that have been advanced on behalf of Plymouth and the surrounding area can be advanced for Rosyth. The impact of privatisation will lead to a reduction in the labour force, which will have an impact on the economy of Fife. The Scottish dockyard may have the advantage of the services of the Industry Department within the Scottish Office, the Scottish Development Agency and Locate in Scotland, but with all these estimable institutions we still have unacceptably high unemployment in Scotland.

I wish to concentrate on the plight of Plymouth. The House has a responsibility to those who live in the area,

[Mr. O'Neill]

not least because the Devonport dockyard is the largest employer and is the hub of the industrial economy, such as it is, in that part of Britain. The job loss figures given by the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) have been confirmed by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). We are talking of 5,500 jobs, and probably nearer 8,000 when account is taken of the multiplier effect. Job losses of that scale would have a devastating effect on any economy, but the dockyard in Plymouth is the major industrial employer and the major trainer of labour. Within a few years it is likely that skills will not be applied. Skills will be lost or not acquired because of the rundown in the training function and the training centre within the dockyard. The impact of privatisation will be considerable on those employed directly within the dockyard and on small privately owned firms which hitherto have worked in partnership with the publicly owned dockyard. The prospects of work for the dockyard are, to say the least, somewhat gloomy.

Last week's *Jane's Defence Weekly* contained a report on the private dockyard in the form of Tyne Shiprepair and Plymouth, Devonport and the outfitting and refitting of Arethusa and Euryalus. I raise the issue because it demonstrates one of the fundamental flaws in the Government's approach to employment creation and industrial policy. The Government seem concerned to reshuffle unemployed people around the country so that there is a temporary remission for Tyneside.

The refitting of the Euryalus was directed to Tyne Shiprepair, which has had the effect of reducing the work load of Devonport. It was a complex scheme for the refitting of two frigates. The Devonport work was completed in about 38 weeks, whereas the Tyne Shiprepair work took about 11 weeks longer. *Jane's Defence Weekly* apportioned part of the blame to the Ministry of Defence. It has been suggested that about 20 per cent. more work was involved in the Tyne Shiprepair job and that it may well have been carried out at a lower price. Of course, that matter is not open to us. The steel shutters immediately fall when we talk about price. We enter an area of confidentiality that confuses the question whether the privatisation exercise or agency management will be successful. As far as one can see, the Devonport dockyard appears to come out of the latest scheme comparatively favourably.

The continuation of the Devonport dockyard is, certainly at the moment, beyond question. Many of us are concerned about the climate that will prevail in the dockyard over the coming weeks and months. We shall see agency management in the period up to the general election and a change in the system of management of the dockyard. Certainly there is the widespread suspicion on the part of Brown and Root of the former owner, Halliburton, and its associations with the Libyan Government. In the Secretary of State's latest letter to the unions he does not rule out the possibility of an American director.

When one considers the impact of an agency management on Plymouth and the surrounding area, one must take account of the climate of opinion and morale within the dockyard. We must make sure that that once proud yard does not become too depressed. I am certain that the quality of work will be sustained, but morale manifests itself in a variety of ways in industrial establishments. The Government must bear a responsibility for the depressing effect that will certainly be felt thoughout the sub-region.

Local councillors have shown their support for various initiatives that have already been taken by Plymouth city council. It is significant that Plymouth city council—a Conservative council—has been at the forefront of the campaign to secure economic regeneration for the area. The most successful parts of regional policy elsewhere in the country have been listed. Given the present climate in which we live, I suspect that any gains that come to Plymouth and the surrounding areas—I wish them well—will more probably than not come at the expense of other parts of the county. My understanding—perhaps the Minister will confirm it—is that the regional review procedures have been completed. I understand that there is not likely to be any change in development area status for any area or another review of the boundaries for some time to come.

It will take a change of Government to bring about a change of priorities. Certainly, when the Labour party come to power, we shall overturn the agency management scheme and restore full public ownership of the dockyard. We recognise that that is the first step. We recognise, too, that other forms of assistance for the disadvantaged areas of the country will have to be introduced. A regional development agency would be a step in the right direction.

Dr. Owen: This is not a trick question; I know that the hon. Gentleman is genuinely interested in the problem. He referred to public ownership. Does he mean that the dockyard will be returned to the Civil Service, or does he envisage some of the newer types of public ownership that have been discussed recently by the Labour party?

Mr. O'Neill: The right hon. Gentleman has followed this debate as closely as I have over the years. He knows that the Labour party's commitment is to a Government-owned plc. That is the preferred option. It would provide a degree of financial control and financial discipline. That has been one of the difficulties. I know that the right hon. Gentleman, in his previous incarnation as a Minister, instituted review schemes. Had it not been for the general election in 1970, other systems might have been established.

The Labour party would establish a Government-owned plc. That would provide opportunities for improvements in both management and efficiency and for the maximisation of the opportunities that such a massive industrial undertaking affords. We should support local authority initiatives. Local regional assistance can lead to too much bureaucracy. Appropriate agencies can work in conjunction with Departments that have responsibility for Wales and Scotland, but that does not mean that there have to be similar arrangements for every region. We should fully support Plymouth city council and would seek to back its initiatives, which enjoy the overwhelming support of all sections of the community. The Conservative majority group on Plymouth city council is at one with its traditional political opponents in seeking to minimise the damage that this hare-brained scheme of agency management will inflict on the community.

The Labour party has welcomed this opportunity to refer to the serious problems that will face this part of the south-west. The Government's palliatives are not commensurate with the amount of damage that will

probably be inflicted. It is difficult for such a fragile economy to sustain the loss of 8,000 jobs in a relatively short period. The only realistic prospect of solving these difficulties would be the return to power of a Labour Government at the earliest opportunity. In the first instance, a Labour Government would put an end to agency management. They would also seek to restore morale in the dockyard's work force and to provide the kind of training and infrastructure that the area requires. They would work with the agencies and organisations in the area that are seeking to secure prosperity once again for this part of England.

As a Scot, I know that London must seem remote because of its distance from that part of the south-west. It is just as remote from the people in the south-west as it is from those who live north of the Tweed. I have every sympathy with that part of England. I say to those who will be reading reports of this debate outside the House —the galleries are not exactly packed at the moment— that, as with other parts of the country such as Scotland and Wales, the only way to support and protect depressed areas is to elect Labour Members of Parliament so that we can carry out the process of industrial and social construction which this hare-brained scheme has highlighted in this part of England.

6.25 am

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Giles Shaw): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) on raising this issue. The debate has been well attended, with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) showing his commitment to the region. The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) spoke about the return of a Labour Government, which was not the answer that my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East was looking for. The presence throughout the debate of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence is an indication of the genuine concern that the Government feel about this issue. They believe that it is important, that it should be looked at with great care and that solutions should be found.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East will not be surprised to hear that it is difficult for me to share his views on the changes in policy which have led to the decisions that have been taken on the dockyards. He has heard from several of my hon. Friends that we believe that his worries about this change of policy are unfounded. The Government believe that either of the other options that were considered for the dockyards—a trading fund, or a Government-owned plc, which is the option that is favoured by the hon. Member for Clackmannan — promised less for the Royal Navy, the taxpayer and the employees in the regions in which the dockyards are located.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East will know that over the past 15 years or more successive Governments have been concerned about the system under which the dockyards have operated, and a number of studies have been carried out. We have never pretended that all of the studies have reached the same conclusion, and much less have we suggested that they have argued for the policy that we have now decided to follow. There has been general agreement that there should be significant changes. Despite the fact that the studies that were carried out by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) found that there was a crisis in the dockyards, the system has remained largely unchanged for a long time.

That was the background against which the 1985 review took place. The aims were simply to get the best value for the part of the defence budget that is spent on refitting and repairing the naval vessels; to improve the efficiency of the two dockyards; to maximise the degree of competition between the dockyards and the ship repair industry; to separate the customer—the Navy—from the supplier—the dockyards; and to introduce new work into the dockyards to offset job losses that would otherwise result from the decline of the naval refit and repair programme.

That is the context in which my hon. Friend raised these issues. They have been debated on a number of occasions in the House, and our view remains that the aims that we set ourselves will best be met by introducing commercial management.

As the subject of the debate is regional policy, I shall say something about the background to the Navy Board's comments on job losses. The ship work programme is declining. Over the next seven years the impact of the overall reduction in load will be on Devonport. There are several reasons for the decline, including the fact that the more modern warships and nuclear powered submarines require less regular refit and repair work to be carried out.

However, two matters are certain. First, the decline has nothing to do with commercial management; it would have occurred under any form of management. Secondly, there is no truth in the story engendered by Opposition Members that we have encouraged the engineering standards to be lowered. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has estimated that if dockyards had been retained under more direct managment, for example, with nothing but naval work on which to rely, there would have been a reduction in the work force at Devonport alone of some 5,000 over the next seven years, and some 4,500 of that number would have occurred in the first four years.

Devonport Management Ltd, with which my right hon. Friend signed a contract in respect of Devonport on 24 February, has estimated job losses totalling about 2,300 by 1990. The company hopes to balance the reductions by an extensive retraining programme, by natural wastage, voluntary redundancies and early retirements. However, in 1987 selective recruitment will be necessary and the company estimates that 125 to 150 apprentices will be recruited. Devonport Management Ltd. intends to develop locally the skilled human resources required for the future success of the dockyard.

Neither my hon. Friend and Member for Cornwall, South-East nor the right hon. Member for Devonport or anybody else would welcome any reduction in the local labour force. However, I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that by developing new commercial activities based on the considerable expertise and capacity at Devonport the new management should, with co-operation and good will on both sides, be better placed to exploit the opportunities that clearly must exist for growth in the enterprise.

My hon. Friend raised a number of issues about the consequences of regional policy on what is now happening. I shall deal first with assisted or intermediate area status for Plymouth. In November 1984 my Department granted the Plymouth travel-to-work area

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

intermediate status in recognition of Plymouth's importance as the principal industrial centre in the extreme south-west and because of the need to encourage employment and economic growth.

The Government are presently considering the submission prepared by Plymouth city council for the travel-to-work area status to be retained after November 1987. The hon. Member for Clackmannan raised this issue. It is peculiar to Plymouth because the arrangement that was made by the European Commission at the time was for three years only. Hence, there is this review of the Plymouth position. The hon. Member was quite right when he said that there was no other review currently in progress which affects the assisted area plan.

The proposal by Plymouth will be urgently considered by my Department and I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East that it will be forwarded to the European Commission whose agreement we obviously require in order to continue the intermediate area status for Plymouth. The present agreement expires in November and we intend to ensure that action is taken as soon as possible. I can tell my hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Devonport that I fully support in principle the case that the council has made for the continuation of Plymouth's intermediate area status. I hope that the case will be referred to the Commission at the end of this month or in early April.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East was critical of the amounts being spent on regional assistance in the south-west in general and in Plymouth in particular. I understand the feelings of all hon. Members who represent areas, whether assisted or not, that are clearly deprived who believe that insufficient funds are being made available. However, since 1984 regional selective assistance of over £2·6 million has been paid by my Department for projects worth £21 million that are expected to create or safeguard more than 1,000 jobs in the Plymouth area alone.

Plymouth currently enjoys assisted area status and has obviously benefited from ERDF assistance with the development of industrial areas and new initiatives. Plymouth also receives urban programme support for new projects from the Department of the Environment and the 1987-88 allocation is £360,000. Of course, regional assistance spreads beyond that in the south-west and I know that my hon. Friend fully recognises that.

The amount of regional assistance to the south-west since 1979 is about £33 million with which 11,898 jobs have been created and a further 1,700 safeguarded. About £78 million of regional development grant has been expended in the south-west alone. That has created a further 3,150 jobs. While understanding my hon. Friend's view that more could be done, I must tell him that substantial sums to generate activity in the south-west in general and in Plymouth in particular have been spent during the Government's term of office.

I turn to the development of an agency for Devon and Cornwall. The right hon. Member for Devonport raised this matter — not for the first time in my presence — which he studies so keenly. I do not presently support the view that an agency could be the right solution for that part of the country. A combined effort must be made by the major counties of Devon and Cornwall to produce the necessary initiative to attract more investment to the far south-west. I fully support the recent development of the Devon and Cornwall development bureau and I hope that it will be widely supported in that region.

It has not been easy to get the degree of joint commitment and collaboration that is fundamental and essential for an active regional development organisation. We have increased grants to the development bureau to £320,000 for the promotion of inward investment in the south-west. I trust that it will be encouraged by this modest gesture to obtain a broader basis of support and to develop more joint policies which could attract investment. But it is a late development.

The right hon. Member for Devonport, supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East, said that the area deserves the special focus and urgent treatment that is implied in the change for the dockyard. My hon. Friend listed six issues. The question of the article 15 application has been of concern to him for some time, and I share that concern. Article 15 applications have significant public expenditure implications. I assure my hon. Friend that we are considering urgently the policy on the treatment of article 15 applications, and I hope that an announcement will be made soon on resolving that dispute.

I accept that English Estates should undertake a full programme in the area, and I shall take a close interest in its policies for the Plymouth area and the south-west. I accept that in the coming year it may have a role in enabling the opportunity for development of industrial sites to be progressed. My Department cannot be wholly responsible for training generally, but I will ensure that my hon. Friends in the Department of Employment consider the point.

The business improvement scheme is widely accepted as a form of assistance, especially for small businesses. My hon. Friend recommends that the scheme should be extended to Plymouth. There will be no further European Community extension of the BIS at the moment, but we will carefully consider having a nationally funded extension. I understand the importance that my hon. Friend attaches to that measure. The BIS has an important part to play in many areas that have suffered from structural or sudden decline, which my hon. Friend emphasised in relation to the dockyard.

There are a number of enterprises already in place in the Plymouth travel-to-work area. There is a network of local enterprise agencies and community-led organisations, supported by Government, whose primary purpose is to provide support and advice for those who may want to become self-employed. The Manpower Services Commission provides financial support for those in that category under its enterprise allowance scheme at the rate of £40 per week for 52 weeks. Currently there are 1,640 people on the scheme in Devon. The MSC also provides a number of training programmes that are specifically designed to assist men and women who wish to start new businesses.

For those who may not find employment on leaving the dockyard, the MSC has a broad range of training and retraining programmes, including the new job training scheme. As a long stop, the MSC's community programme provides 12 months' work for longer-term unemployed people, and there are currently 4,000 approved places in Devon. Certain other developments are being brought to bear on the problems that my hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Devonport have raised. Again, I shall

ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to review these in the light of the comments that my hon. Friend has made.

Other issues raised by the right hon. Member for Devonport concerned land and land holding. He will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has received a consultants' report known as the Plymouth area survey, which seeks to rationalise the property of the Ministry of Defence in Devonport and the surrounding areas. The report is being urgently considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, and he fully understands the need for conclusions to be reached soon. This is exactly the sort of survey that would have the effect that the right hon. Member for Devonport would wish to see, with special and urgent attention being given to the Ministry's holdings within the Plymouth area. I hope that the report will produce solutions for it.

I understand that there are issues in connection with the release of land, the planning of enterprise zones, and the development of an airport. The question of the Plymouth area, and measures to alleviate the consequences of the changes in the dockyards, which have been put in hand, require a multi-purpose approach. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence met the Plymouth council recently, in the company of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), whose commitment to dealing with these problems is total, it was suggested that there should be a co-ordinated effort by all Departments. I expect that, again, this is something that my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East would fully support.

There has been no specific departmental initiative, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence attended a meeting with the council. As a result, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton accepted the remit to bring together officials from the Departments of Employment, of Trade and Industry and of the Environment and from the Ministry of Defence with the object of recognising those elements in the programmes that would relate to them. Assuming that it is approved by the policy resources committee, the Departments will receive the Plymouth city plan, which is another important initiative relating to the consequences of the changes in the dockyard.

We recognise the enormous problems that Plymouth is facing as a result of the changes in the dockyards. The Government will be doing all that they can to support the local economy during its present difficult period of restructuring. Obviously this is a matter that cannot be changed easily or quickly, but the Government, through their economic policy, are providing a climate of sustained growth and falling inflation within which they can expand and flourish. I am sure that Plymouth, too, will take full advantage as it seeks to improve and develop its economic base.

The Economy (North-East)

6.43 am

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): A debate on the north-east is long overdue. I can recall only one other debate in this Parliament on this region. This is inadequate when one considers the amount of time that is given to Scotland and Wales in both Question Time and debates. It may seem early in the morning, but in the north-east many are going to work. Many start shifts at this time. The only puzzle is the absence of the entire north-east Labour party, whose Members are no doubt slumbering on peacefully in their beds, or perhaps elsewhere—perhaps Mr. Ken Livingstone might investigate.

This is a useful opportunity to draw attention to the importance of the region in our economy and to the background to the region's economic development. Nearly 3 million people live and work in the north-east, which is a region with a proud history and, more important this morning, it is a region with a future. I first spent some time in the north-east on Teesside, back in 1974. It was a region then dominated by the state. Its major industries were nationalised industries, such as coal, steel, rail, engineering and shipbuilding, or they were industries which were heavily dependent upon the state for grants, such as chemicals engineering, and so on. At that time, 40 per cent. of the region's housing was public housing of one form or another. Half of all its income taxpayers received some sort of benefit.

In the mid-1970s it might have appeared that the region's economy was in good health. Men were being paid good wages, but those wages were being paid because of inflation and by means of subsidy. A higher proportion of men were in work in the mid-1970s than are in work today, but beneath the surface of that slightly higher level of employment jobs were dangerously concentrated. Almost one third of employment in manufacturing was concentrated in large units employing 1,000 men or more, and too many of those men were doing semi-skilled or relatively unskilled work and were highly vulnerable to technological change.

The commercial culture of the north-east was, I found, fundamentally conservative, risk-shy and anti-entrepreneurial, and so we suffered in our region more than other regions in England when it came to the second oil hike and the world trade recession of 1979-80. We lost jobs more rapidly than other regions and too many of our people became dependent upon welfare and on provision by local government of housing, transport and other services.

Since then, much has changed and my belief is that the north-east is getting back into business. Manufacturing is expanding, not simply in the United Kingdom, but specifically in the north-east. New companies are being established in the north-east; some 6,000 new businesses are being set up every year. Small businesses are growing. The House does not have to take my word for it. Yesterday the *Northern Echo* published a survey entitled, "North on way back," which said:

> "Business confidence is returning to the North-East, according to top financial specialists. Research carried out this month . . . in the region has revealed growing optimism. More than 80 per cent. of those asked by the business intelligence section of David Sheppard and Associates . . . said business confidence had improved over the last three

[Mr. Michael Fallon]

months. Management buy-out activity had increased significantly; profits were up, even in declining traditional industries, and firms were becoming more competitive in overseas markets."

Business is back with a vengeance.

Ownership is changing in the north-east. We have sold 40,000 council houses, and hundreds of thousands of people in the north-east have become share owners for the first time. A total of 25,000 people in the north-east have become self-employed. Fifteen years ago ownership was concentrated in the hands of the state or in the hands of the few. People were working in the pits and the shipyards for the Government. Production managers, even in the private sector factories, were working for multinational corporations with their headquarters miles away. More and more people in the north-east are now working for themselves or in businesses in which they have a direct stake.

Employment is improving in the north-east. Redundancies continue, of course, and my hon. Friend the Minister will know of the redundancies in my constituency. However, redundancies now are increasingly being out-numbered by the new jobs that are being created. There are 40,000 more people in work than in 1983. If I had predicted that when I stood for election in Darlington in 1983, I might not have been believed. About 25,000 people left the unemployment register every month last year in the north-east. For the first time in years we have the prospect that this year the north-east will see unemployment dipping below the 200,000 level.

I should like to give a simple example from my own constituency of the way in which that industrial and economic change is taking place. I could refer to the many manufacturing companies in Darlington which have added labour during the past four or five years—for example, Harvey Plating and Magnet and Southerns—but I shall refer to a much smaller company called Konlangaz Ltd. I first visited this company in 1983, when it had one small factory on an industrial estate in Darlington and employed 12 people in the manufacture of coal and log-effect gas fires. It was having great difficulties in persuading British Gas to approve and take on its products.

I returned to Konlangaz Ltd. nearly four years later. It now has four factories, three in Darlington and one in Aycliffe. Instead of employing 12 people, it now employs 72 and hopes to employ more than 100 by the end of this year. The company has benefited, not only from the Government, through assistance under the new regional policy and under the job grant scheme, but from the privatisation of British Gas, because the new enlightened British Gas is now fully marketing its products.

Such expansion shows that small businesses can grow into medium-sized businesses in the north-east and that they do not need the elixir of a development agency or the type of state planning about which we hear from Opposition Members. However, they need steady progress and economic recovery on a national level from the Government, and Government assistance in the form of training and environmental aid. That is the role that the Government should play in the north-east.

First, the Government should get the United Kingdom economy right, because unless they do that they cannot hope to get the north-east economy right. Successive low inflation year after year is of far more benefit to any finance director than any amount of regional development grant. Stable finances make the north-east, as well as the rest of the country, a more attractive location for international investment. I do not believe that Nissan would have come to the north-east, rather than to Belgium, Ireland, Holland or anywhere else if it had not seen the prospect of a sound economy, with low inflation, stretching for years ahead in this country.

Privatisation is vitally important for the north-east. Lower energy costs are important for our industries, but, more than that, we must diversify ownership and the industrial base in the north-east to provide employment for our people.

The environment that the Government have begun to create is also vitally important. In the north-east it is vital, not simply that small businesses start up, but that new businesses start up, because so many of our older businesses have shed labour. The first and primary role of the Government in the north-east is to get the United Kingdom economy right.

Secondly, it is Government's legitimate function to provide the modern industrial environment that we need in the north-east and to clear away the debris of the past and of the last industrial age. Therefore, we should not carp at a small reduction in capital grants under regional development policy. On Teesside those grants seemed to go to those important companies that were shedding, rather than recruiting, labour; for example, ICI and the British Steel Corporation. I am delighted that that small reduction in capital grants and in the grants for modernisation and reinvestment has been more than compensated for by the amount of urban and environmental aid that we receive in our region.

The derelict land clearance scheme is now an important instrument of regional policy and we are seeing direct results in our rail-side revival project in Darlington. I look forward on Teesside to the establishment of the urban development corporation. This is the only way of pulling together the public and private sectors and of revitalising that area of desperate dereliction.

Thirdly, it is the Government's function to train and retrain our work force. In the past 10 or 15 years the north-east has not had the new skills necessary to adapt to the new demands of industry. No Government in my experience have done more than this one to help train and retrain our work force. I note that some 25,000 youngsters will benefit from the youth training scheme in the north-east this year and that same 20,000 adults will receive training. Such is the importance of training to our region that even of the Labour party's programme for 1 million jobs, nearly 400,000 will come through extra training places.

I note, too, that the sums spent on training in the north-east far outweigh those spent in the south-east. In the south-east, £59 per head is spent on training, the British average is £107, and in the north-east we are getting £179 per head. That is the answer to those who carp at the so-called lack of Government support for the north-east.

A fourth, equally important, dimension to the Government's work in the north-east is confidence building. The region has been short of self-confidence for the past 10 years. We need to promote the north-east, and only the Government can assist us to do that. We have much to do ourselves to promote better working practices,

new forms of industrial management, a better environment for business, lower rates and more attractive conditions for enterprise, but the Government can assist us to promote the north-east, not as we used to, as a sort of rust bowl and industrial culture ever dependent on grants from London, but as a region of opportunity. It is one of our few regions where there is space for development, room to breathe and a feeling of warmth and community, so often lacking in the rootless suburbia of the south-east and the crowded M4 corridor. It has the attractive countryside of the moors and dales on its doorstep. We must promote a region where we can combine low-cost enterprise with a much higher quality of life than exists elsewhere and above all a region which can produce premium goods and services.

How do we promote the region in that way? After many experiments and much adjustment we are beginning to see the right type of promotional framework. We now have the Northern Development Company, northern investors to attract venture capital into the region, two new urban development corporations almost up and running on Tyneside and Teesside with formidable budgets, and local enterprise agencies hard at work in most of the industrial and commercial centres. We now have the promotional framework to start marketing the north-east as a region of opportunity and I look to my hon. Friend the Minister to encourage us in that task.

There are a few ways in which my hon. Friend the Minister can assist us more directly. He has the power to locate institutions of Government. What happened to the Civil Service dispersal programme of the mid-1970s? Why is it not possible to reconsider the difficulties of recruiting secretarial, clerical and technical staff in the metropolis and see whether that work can be done more easily and more cheaply further north? Why are so many public bodies and quangos still located in the south? What is the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce doing in Reading? Why is it not at the top of the Vale of York? Why are the headquarters of so many of our nationalised industries in London? Why is the Coal Board in Belgravia? Why is it not in the north-east? What are British Shipbuilders doing in Knightsbridge, and British Steel in Pimlico?

Why do we not reconsider the huge spending power that surrounds defence establishments? So many of these bases, research establishments and regimental headquarters seem to be based in the south and south-west of the country, historically in a region from which the threat has obviously receded. Why are these regiments and defence bases not transferred to the north-east, nearer to the NATO flank, which after all we are committed to defend? Why are we not servicing our Army on the Rhine from the nearest accessible geographical location, the north-east coast, north-east England and eastern Scotland?

What about the Department of Trade and Industry? What can my hon. Friend the Minister do to market the region and its goods and services? There are a number of almost surreptitious organisations; for example, Better Made in Britain. I appreciate the constraints of Community law, but we need to sell the north-east, not only in Europe and overseas, but to ourselves. I wonder sometimes why we do not have a "Great North" exhibition to showcase the industrial and commercial premium products that we produce in the north-east and so encourage the rest of the country to come up and take a look.

The north-east is changing. It has been through a dramatic period of change. I believe that the present Government policies of getting the United Kingdom economy right, of training and retraining our workers, of clearing away the old industrial environment and helping to provide a modern industrial business climate are the right policies. For the first time in 10 or 15 years those policies should allow the north-east to ride industrial change and go with that change, instead of simply being the victim of that change, as has happened so often in the past.

7.3 am

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on his success in securing this debate. It is very relevant to the north-east and to the country as a whole that this region of Britain, which has, in the past, been so important in sustaining the growth of Britain's manufacturing industry, should be seen to have a future and not just a past. Over the past few years my hon. Friend has contributed greatly to the debate on the future and economy of the region, because of the effect that it has nationally. He has put forward a consistent line and always produced a most thoughtful and detailed analysis of the region's problems and the way in which they can be tackled.

My hon. Friend's ideas have always been original and thought provoking, and I should like to identify myself with their general trend. There are always specifics with which individuals disagree. I make no secret of the fact that the suggestion that the region would benefit from so-called wage flexibility does not appeal to me. I know, however, that it appeals to many hon. Members. I think that the region needs not wage flexibility, which I interpret as low wages, but rather the reverse. The way to inspire the expansion and growth of the region's economy is to attract talent by giving it a special incentive to come. That is a minor disagreement. There is general agreement about what is needed to secure a sound and growing future for the region.

I should like to draw attention to the need to sell the region as one of hope, opportunity and the future. My hon. Friend has consistently tried to do that, in the face, unfortunately, of negative impressions being created by Opposition Members. In his excellent speech this morning, my hon. Friend has returned to that theme.

What would an unscrupulous competitor say if he wanted to attract something that he feared would go to the north-east? He would portray the north-east as a region of failure. He would say that it is old-fashioned and based on a crumbling industrial structure. He would say that there is no hope of recovery, that there is rampant unemployment, which is bound to get worse, that people live in grinding poverty, have no will to survive and no longer feel that they have anything to contribute to society, that there is no hope of new industry going to the region, that the infrastructure offers nothing to industry, that what is required is more public spending that is locally raised, and that the Government have no interest in the region. It would not be surprising if such comments put people off from going to the region.

Unfortunately, that is precisely what too many politicians in the region are saying. They sum up the gloom-mongering reports that are produced with unremitting consistency by the quasi job promotion

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agencies which, unfortunately, are prolific in the area. I am not referring to the agencies to which my hon. Friend referred and which do a good job, but to others such as the North-East County Councils Association—I do not know whether it is now defunct—which had an annual funeral to bury the economy of the north-east and tried to make it more ponderous each year.

Is it not time that such reports drew attention to the positive things that the region can offer, many of which my hon. Friend referred to? They could start with the natural resources which give the region an unparalleled advantage. We have a beautiful and extensive landscape. Much wealth still lies below the surface of the soil. Our infrastructure is among the best in Britain. We have a coastline and sea ports. The mighty Tyne and Tees flow through the region. There is rich farmland. There is housing and space for new housing. The skilled and willing work force is still there and available.

There are added advantages that the Government have brought, such as the enterprise zone, which has proved successful on Tyneside, the urban development corporations, which have been promised and which, when they come, will inspire more growth in areas that most need it, and the regional grants that are available to industry. There has been a high level of Government spending since 1979 in all aspects of the region's life. There are positive signs of economic and employment growth, an example of which is the Metro Centre on Tyneside, which, in the enterprise zone, has already created more than 5,000 jobs and promises a further 5,000.

The Nissan car plant at Washington, a few miles from the Tyne, although not yet a great employer, is growing at a fast rate producing Japanese cars in Britain. This country has wanted to do that for decades. The company has made the most optimistic predictions for the future and it has continually brought forward its deadlines for expansion. We will see thousands of jobs at Nissan before many years have passed.

The chemical industry, having gone through hard times, as has every British industry, is now on a clear upward growth pattern. It is a diversified industry in the region, particularly in pharmaceuticals, and that industry was not there 20 or 30 years ago.

My hon. Friend rightly referred to training and retraining. The effort, investment and dedication to such activities in the north-east are not equalled anywhere. This is helping to provide a strong structure for the future as industry and investment in the region pick up, as they will.

I referred earlier to the negative side of the formula, characterising the approach of many local government, particularly Socialist, politicians, and in that context I shall quote from a report that was published earlier this month. I referred to it in the House the day after it was published. The report, aptly entitled "It's Not Really Like That", has been compiled by someone who calls himself an academic, one Fred Robinson of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. Apparently it was commissioned —I should love to know what it cost—by BBC North-East to help in the production of a programme about unemployment in the area. I have rarely read a more depressing and soul-destroying document, and I am left wondering about the mental health of the compiler once he had completed his task, for only someone with the most sturdy spirit could continue to find life worth while after writing such depressing and dreary words.

As it is only 7.15 in the morning and we have the rest of the day in which to recover, I shall read to the House a few extracts from this report to illustrate how inaccurate and unhelpful they must be to anybody who wants seriously to examine the economic and unemployment problems of the region with a view to doing something about them. The author comes to this conclusion on the front page, before going into the arguments and evidence:

"The economy of the region is trapped in a spiral of long-term decline. The future prospects appear grim. There is no light at the end of the tunnel and there are no policies currently on offer which are able too make much of an impact on the region's problems and halt the decline."

It is significant that he claims that no policies are currently on offer from any party. I hope that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who is seated on the Opposition Front Bench, has sufficient faith in his party's policies, if he does not have faith in ours, to reject that statement.

Mr. Robinson continues:

"the fundamental feature of the region is economic decline"—

the definition of the region—

"which has had an enormous and damaging impact."

It will continue to do. He asks whether this part of Britain is

"going to be left to decline, abandoned by industry and relatively neglected by Government."

We are only into the second page of the report when we come to that conclusion. Mr. Robinson then proceeds to the devastating conclusion that 19th century success in the region was "founded on coal-mining". It must have required days of research to ascertain that. He then comes to the equally devastating conclusion:

"the North East, like other parts of the country, was experiencing considerable economic problems even before 1978-79".

I wonder why he chooses that date.

Dealing with recent economic trends, Mr. Robinson writes:

"there are strong indications that economic and employment decline will continue".

Every page of the report is characterised by a further and gloomier statement. On page 10, Mr. Robinson writes:

"there are few signs that the region is recovering."

He then comes to the enterprise zones and the urban development corporations, both of which he dismisses in less than a sentence, with no reference to the successes which the enterprise zone has had and the true objective of the development corporations. There is no mention of the Metro Centre or of the 5,000 or 6,000 jobs that have been created. When reference is made to Nissan, it is in a dismissive way in one paragraph as though it means nothing for the future economy of the region.

When it comes to self-employment, Mr. Robinson grudgingly admits that there has been some success, although he says that it has been "modest". He suggests that it will not work because of

"lack of capital, skills and relevant experience."

In a rather curious sentence he says:

"The encouragement of self-employment and small firm growth may be a reasonable component . . . but it will not do much to reduce unemployment."

So he dismisses in a phrase the possibility of self-employment or of small firm growth offering a long-term future for the region. Indeed, Mr. Robinson says:

"It is clear that existing policy measures do not represent a solution to the region's problems."

Mr. Robinson then comes to a very curious conclusion when talking about what is needed. This is one of the few "positive" aspects of the report — "positive", that is, from his point of view, not mine. He suggests that reductions in public expenditure have curtailed employment growth and that the reverse is required, pointing to rate capping as one of the most dangerous aspects of policy for economic growth. He uses the curious sentence:

"Ameliorative economic development policy measures are indeed modest when compared with the impacts of these other policy actions".

I think that he is trying to say that he wants more public spending but does not seem to be able to force his pen to construct those words.

Mr. Robinson comes to the heading "Prospects", summing up with the wonderfully incisive description:

"The economic prospects for the region are grim . . . It is . . . apparent that further major job losses are to be expected".

And so it goes on. I can see hon. Members sinking into a slough of total despondency, so perhaps I had better not quote the remaining sentences from that section. They go in exactly the same direction. I shall therefore miss the middle sections of the report, which merely add further substance to what I have said, and will instead come to the conclusion.

Not surprisingly, one finds that exactly the same sorts of conclusions and sentences as in the introduction, which was not supposed to be a conclusion. Mr. Robinson says that it is unlikely that the position will improve at any stage. He says:

"Pious hopes . . . are inappropriate and are hardly a serious response to an enormous problem."

I have appeared to dwell at great length on all the aspects that Mr. Robinson highlighted in the report, but my point is that he never suggests anything positive. He does not suggest any policies or how the problems should be tackled. It is purely a catalogue of what is wrong and a criticism of everyone involved and of every policy adopted.

There is no suggestion of a positive policy, and that is typical of the approach to the region adopted by those who hold vaguely Socialist or Labour beliefs. The only positive thing that I can find is the rather enigmatic phrase:

"but the 'bottom line' is the distribution of income".

Fred Robinson does not go on to say what he intends to do about that. I take it to mean some sort of vague Marxist interpretation of the economy of the north-east and that he wishes to see some form of redistributional economics. It completely escapes me how that policy will be implemented and how it will represent a realistic answer to the region's problems. It is no surprise that the BBC television programme, "The Smiths"—according to the BBC and Fred Robinson, it is based on that report—is a rather depressing programme. However, I am glad to say that it is not as bad as the report.

Mr. Fallon: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most shameful things about the report is that it carries the imprint of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne? It is increasingly difficult to defend the excellence of this centre of learning against threats to its existence when shoddy reports such as this are produced by the pseudo-academic unit of that university, the Curds Centre.

Mr. Merchant: I accept my hon. Friend's point and I have also seen his early-day motion. It does not help the excellent academic reputation of the University of Newcastle, nor the many efforts to try to attract help to the university from all sources, to have its name on such a report. This tends to happen from time to time in university departments. Anyone who has any doubts should read this report—I do not wish to consign it all to the wastebin — as it represents an object lesson in what is wrong with those who approach the problems of the north-east with this terrible negative attitude.

The report and the television programme dwell on unemployment, which is a serious, severe problem. In castigating the report and accepting the limitations of the television series I do not, in any sense, wish to play down the severity of unemployment in the region. It is very serious and we will not tackle it by turning our backs on the problem.

I have spent a considerable time investigating, in one way or another, how the problem applies to individuals rather than to statistics—statistics do not tell the whole story. A few months ago I spent a week trying to put myself — admittedly imperfectly and in an artificial situation—in a position where I could understand more about those on Tyneside and in my constituency who must face long-term unemployment. That experience had a profound influence upon me and it changed my views. I am the first to admit to the serious poverty of spirit, hopelessness and hardship that stems from long-term unemployment. There are also severe side-effects. There are problems with energy bills, vandalism, crime and the environmental decay that is focused in areas of high unemployment.

I do not wish to appear to be turning my back on the most severe problem of unemployment—above all else, our policies must tackle that problem — but I have spoken to a great many unemployed people about their needs, and the first thing that they say they want is a job. Therefore, it is right that we should focus our attention on the economy and on industrial regeneration.

In conclusion, I wish to draw attention to those problems that require the implementation of Government policies to try to reach a settlement that will create the jobs that are vital to the region. The impact of local government rates in the highly-rated areas of the north-east, such as Newcastle, cannot be underrated, if you will excuse a pun, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The impact is colossal. I have a wealth of evidence from companies and individuals who have moved from the region, downgraded their activities, planned to move or have failed to invest more because of the high level of the rates.

I am a strong and passionate advocate of the Government's proposal to replace the rating system with a community charge for householders and by an equalised rate system for businesses. When I spoke to my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government two days ago, he assured me that on the business and industry front in Newcastle there will be a fall of about 40 per cent. in the cost of rates, a saving of about £35 million a year to local business as a result of the rates equalisation that the Government intend to introduce. I welcome the move forward wholeheartedly and believe that it will bring a major change to investment and economic approaches in Newcastle. I hope that the system will be introduced as soon as possible.

I was delighted to learn from the figures that the majority of householders in the city will benefit. We must understand that householders bring businesses and

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investment into the region and that they will see a reduction in their present rate bills when the community charge is introduced. Many of them will enjoy a major decrease in what is now their rate bill. They will pay about £250 to £300 a head in the form of a community charge, according to my hon. Friend the Minister, and this will clearly benefit those who are paying bills of £600 a year, and there are many of them. There will be a marked saving for many. The Government have the right rates reform policy, and it is one of great significance for industrial investment.

The Government have the right policies, as well as their incentive policies, which include enterprise zones and urban development corporations. I hope that more can be done by the introduction of simple, straightforward taxation. I happen to be one of those who believe that nothing is better tailored to help the development of industries and companies than that. I should like to see regional tax differentials, and these could be applied enthusiastically to the region in which my constituency is situated.

I endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington in calling for the greater devolution of state industries, and there is a great prospect of our defence establishments following that course. I regret the decisions that have resulted in the loss of employment in this sector in Newcastle, to the benefit of Leeds. I hope that the Government will look more kindly on the prospects and possibilities of devolution of state jobs.

There is much in the region that could competitively produce and supply essential defence requirements and civil orders, while creating jobs at the same time. It seems only sensible that the Government should be able to fulfil their requirements by providing adequate defences and power stations and all the other requirements of a modern industrialised society, while sustaining jobs in areas where the work force is uniquely capable of producing the goods that are needed. The necessary employees are at hand and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider more vigorously the speeding up of power station orders for Northern Engineering Industries, ship orders for the shipyards on Tyneside and defence orders for Vickers and the Royal Ordnance factory.

I end by complimenting an Opposition Member on his contribution to the process of attracting Government orders to the region. I refer to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), who has shown himself to be acutely aware of the need to look to the future and not the past, which unfortunately many of his colleagues are not. He has led a successful campaign, with which I have tried to identify myself, to being about precisely that approach to orders for NEI, which is situated in his constituency. I congratulate him on that.

There is one point on which I do not entirely see eye to eye with the hon. Gentleman, and that is on the future economic structure of the region. In a recent television programme, he was asked what he would like to see done to encourage the region's economy. He referred to more Government spending and a northern development agency, neither of which is essentially the direction in which the region will prosper in future. At least he had a suggestion which, it could be argued, had some coherence, which is more than can be said for another participant in the programme, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). When asked what he considered was the answer to the region's problems, he visibly swallowed a few times and said:

"Energy conservation and proportional representation."

Neither of those shattering policies will being about the major regeneration that the region requires.

The total lack of vision that characterises the traditional Socialist view of the north-east is illustrated only by the backward gaze of the unseeing eye into a nostalgic and fanciful era of full employment. At this time of the day, and earlier, men would crawl in their thousands along 3 ft high seams to hack out their living in the murky, dripping hell of the coalface, or would stream in their masses through the shipyard gates to hover precariously over the Tyne, constructing huge metal edifices in molten metal to eke out their daily existence. Yet those are the days which, strangely, the Labour party still worships. It apparently wishes to recreate that era. We want to consign history firmly to its place. Our vision is not one of the past, but of the future. It is a vision of hope of a newly constructed economy—of new industry based firmly on a locally inspired enterprise culture.

Just as the country has seen no less than an economic miracle of regeneration brought about by the inspired leadership of radical Thatcherism, so must the positive force of economic liberalism burn freely throughout the north-east so that, when we speak of the north-east being great, we shall refer not to the past but to the future.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): It gives me much pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) on introducing the debate and on highlighting the rather nauseating report by Fred Robinson. It cannot have escaped your notice, Mr. Speaker, that during Question Time earlier today the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) probably typified more exactly the attitude of the Labour party in the north-east than anyone could have done by his rather damning question to the Prime Minister about gloom, doom and job losses. He did not mention the fact that, a fortnight ago, ICI announced the creation of 5,000 new jobs in new technology in Cleveland. That will happen within the next two years. That negative attitude, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central referred, has been prominent in Labour party thinking.

I do not know whether I should consider myself fortunate or unfortunate. My constituency is on the map. It is a permanent fixture, believe it or not. The land, the sea and the coast exist. But county borders move according to the whim of bureaucrats, Governments and diktat. In one way, I shall speak as a Yorkshireman, and in another way I shall speak as a north-easterner because of the vagaries of politicians over the years. The identity of the River Tees area is different from the rest of the north-east of England. That is because it is being run by Conservative-controlled local authorities. The move in that direction is gaining pace.

I am proud to be a frontiers man. All that lies to the south of my constituency is blue, while to the north it is mostly red, apart from a few isolated pockets. However, slowly but surely the people of the north-east are beginning to realise that the Labour party's con trick and the endemic knee-jerk reaction that they must vote Labour because their fathers and grandfathers voted Labour are

being challenged. They realise that the whole area is about to undergo a metamorphosis. No less a person that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales said in my constituency last week that it is time for change and that the people in my region must get used to it. He made that point when launching the Business Youth Enterprise Year in Langbaurgh.

Why is there green-eyed envy of the south-east? I am frequently asked by people in the north-east why there is no difficulty in attracting industry to Buckinghamshire. Frequently I have to tell people—I am rather tired of it, but the tale is worth telling over and over again—that in that area we did not have to ask the union bosses whether we could do this or whether we could do that. In that area trade unions are as relevant as the dodo. They are probably less relevant than the dodo, because in its day the dodo helped to clear the earth of some of its bad things.

There are promising signs and I have already alluded to them. Urban development corporations are coming to Newcastle and to Teesside. I intend to refer to the UDC for Teesside. It is being welcomed by Teesside. Another welcome sign is that, despite all that has been said by the Labour party and its Pavlovian followers against the city technology colleges, the Labour-controlled council of Langbaurgh, to its credit, has accepted the CTC concept. It has made a planning application and designated land for the purpose. It will assist the Government to establish the CTC. It is to that council's credit that it realised that we cannot return to the five year apprenticeship, with lads of 14 or 15 making the tea and learning very little. By means of the CTCs and the technological colleges young people will require the skills that will enable them to obtain the jobs of the future.

While my hon. Friend the Minister of State is reading Fred Robinson's book, which will probably give him nightmares and nausea, he should also read the book entitled "Living at the Fringe." It is a far better study by the University of Durham of the entire region. It is a much more readable and a much truer account of what is happening in the area.

Having given that piece of advice to my hon. Friend, I must now go on to give a little more, though it may be a little harder to swallow. It is time for the Government to wake up and realise where the north-east is. I constantly write to Government Departments telling them that they write and talk about Middlesbrough when they should be talking about Langbaurgh. They use a sort of shorthand for the area of Middlesbrough when they should be talking about Langbaurgh or Stockton. I am disappointed to see that I am the only Cleveland Member of Parliament present for the opportunity, which is so infrequently presented to us, to speak on the region.

We need a major arterial road to run from the south-east of England and not the current deathtrap, the A1 from Doncaster northwards. The number of deaths on that road alone justify the Government's investing to improve that infrastructure. It is not sufficient to say that over the next few years crash barriers will be erected. With the advent of the Euro tunnel it is essential that the north-east of England has an opportunity of direct road access without the bottlenecks and the difficult conditions that exist at the moment.

There is another measure that the Government should be taking for the north-east of England. They should be looking at why we are the only European country that charges light dues for ships. If our ports are to prosper and compete fairly against Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Hamburg and Le Havre, then let us not tie one hand behind our backs to start with by putting an impost on the ship owners for light dues, which should have been abolished in some form over many years.

I can find no economic or justifiable reason why light dues should fall on the limited number of ships that come in. That, while it may seem a loss of revenue to the Treasury, would ultimately be an opportunity for jobs and a work opportunity that we should not miss.

I cannot find any economic logic in continuing with London weighting. That creates the artificial north-south divide that people talk about. Housing problems are created by that, with the consequent lack of fluidity of labour. If someone is being given thousands of pounds a year in addition to his salary for doing exactly the same job, he is able to put a higher proportion of that money into purchasing a house, which pushes up the prices and creates the greater problems that we have in the mobility of labour.

Recently I suggested that the Government should seriously consider giving grants to people in the north-east of England who have been unemployed for a long time so that they can come south, put a deposit on a house and in that way fill the vacancies which exist there. I was condemned by the Labour party in the north-east of England for immoral thinking. What was I doing suggesting that people should be allowed to move from the region? Would I not denude it of all its skills and opportunities? I did not hear those same political parties condemn any Government, including all Labour Governments and the Lib/Lab Government, for allowing people to take inducements to go to Australia, Canada or New Zealand. It seems that it is all right to take money to far-away countries, but it is not all right to be given a grant or assistance for what is now universally recognised as the major problem in job movement—housing and housing costs.

I hope that when we return after the general election one of the Government's first measures will be a new rent Act to do away with that which has been on the statute book for far too long.

I want to refer to a third publication. We have already heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, who spoke eloquently on the question of Robinson's book, and I have referred to the Durham university book. There is one other book which has probably had a smaller readership than the other two. Nevertheless, it is an important book because of its authorship. It identifies absolutely and clearly that, in itself, investment destroys jobs. The book is called "Respond" and it was written by the Bishop of Durham, the Bishop of Whitby and the church leaders in Cleveland.

The book says that the more money one puts into major industries, the more one destroys the jobs in those industries. That must be borne in mind when people talk about giving grants for this and for that. We need a review of the type of society that we shall have throughout Britain and not merely in the north-east of England.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central spoke about high rates. I do not blame him for complaining about that, because he lives in Newcastle and has a burden to bear second only to that borne by my constituents in Cleveland and Middlesbrough who have the miserable distinction of being top of the high rates league. It would not be so bad if people could see

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something good for all that money, but they cannot. Instead, they see depressing situations that are almost out of hand.

A realism is now beginning to appear. The coal industry in the north-east is today in profit. Who would have thought that that was even conceivable 10 years' ago. Certainly, it was not on the mental horizon of anyone 20 years' ago. It was part of the folklore of the area that one continually had to subsidise the coal industry. To have suggested that one day it would be in profit would have been like telling our grandparents that one day a man would land on the moon.

An even greater example of realism is to be found in the steel industry in my constituency which today is profitable and, by every standard, is the stong man of European steel industries. Indeed, it is probably the strong man of the steel industries in the Western world. Everyone who works in those industries take great pride in the fact that all that has been achieved in such a short time. We have a short time in which to make our speeches but I hope that they are significant speeches. It is not the length of a speech that determines its importance, but the content.

I hope that one or two of the markers that I have put down will find a responsive ear in the Government because no area in Britain deserves to have the continuity of a Conservative Government more than the north-east of England. Yesterday in Cleveland I had the pleasure of meeting all the candidates who will join me here shortly as Members of Parliament. When that day comes the north-east of England will be much better.

7.48 am

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): We welcome this opportunity to discuss the problems of the economy in the north-east, not least because of the clear division of opinion that was exhibited early in this debate between the hon. Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) on the issue of regional wage variations and wage costs.

Most of all, we welcome the debate because of the opportunity that it gives us to spell out two days after the publication of our document "New Industrial Strength for Britain" our positive policies for the northern economy. First, these policies would mean an enhancement of training opportunities in the area that would respond to many of the criticisms made by the Manpower Services Commission about the failures in industrial training. Secondly, these policies would mean that more research and development would be carried out in the north and north-east, and they would end the increasing location of research and development in the southern parts of England. Our policies would stimulate industrial investment in the north. One of the figures which the hon. Gentleman did not mention was the catastrophic fall in the real value of manufacturing investment in the north since 1979.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Three weeks ago I asked the Treasury about manufacturing investment in the northern region from 1979 to 1985, that being the period for which that office has figures. The answer was that manufacturing in the northern region had fallen by over 42 per cent. in that period. On the question of research and development, is my hon. Friend aware that the Government have just reduced the amount of money available to Newcastle university, which has had to pay off lecturers and other staff?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments and also to my hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) for being present for this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) is right. The latest figures produced by the Department of Trade and Industry show that the real value of the fall in manufacturing investment since 1979 is about 41 per cent. The fall in manufacturing investment throughout the United Kingdom is about 20 per cent. The northern region has suffered twice as much as the rest of the country.

I am grateful for the comments and concern about Newcastle university. Perhaps the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, who attacked those who worked at Newcastle university and suggested that that university's case for grants was being diminished, might call on the Government and the University Grants Committee to change their position on that matter.

I am grateful for the opportunity to explain our policy for a Northern Development Agency, which has been criticised during this debate. I understand that some Conservative Members have now reluctantly accepted the setting up of the Northern Development Company, and I applaud that. I also applaud the efforts of local authorities, trades unions and industry in the north for getting under way in difficult circumstances. The only policy that seems to commend itself to Conservative Members in their contributions to this debate is a reduction in rates, despite a Government commissioned study which cast doubt on the impact of rates on levels of employment and regional wage variations.

Our policy is for a Northern Development Agency, not for a central bureaucracy dictating to the north what is in its best interests. The Northern Development Agency will be a local agency for local people, meeting local needs, stimulating local industry and local jobs in the north. The agency will commend itself to a far wider community than only the Labour movement in the north of England.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us why the National Economic Development Council, which had masses of money but wasted it, dominated and controlled as it was by nit-picking local councillors, was such a failure?

Mr. Brown: I do not think that that is the view taken in the north. People there welcome the establishment of the Northern Development Company as an extension of what has been done, but most people would like to see, in time, the creation of a Northern Development Agency. Support for that comes not only from this side of the House but most recently from statements by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), who is a convert to the concept of a Northern Development Agency, and by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who favours that concept for England.

The reason why that development agency is needed—and why we will set it up immediately on coming to power—is to deal with some of the fundamental problems that have been identified during the course of this Government but not resolved. The hon. Member for Darlington painted a picture of the northern economy that would not be shared by all the residents of the north of

England. That picture was then confirmed in the speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central. They seemed to be concentrating on the silver linings and ignoring the dark clouds that dominate the industrial horizon of the north.

If the northern economy is doing so well under this Government—let us remember that they have had seven and a half years to deal with the problems with which they promised to deal—why is it that over those years we have lost 171,000 employee jobs? Even after taking into account what Conservative Members call a "boom" in the numbers of self-employed, but what I would call a small increase, the figure is still 150,000 jobs lost.

More than that, why is it that when the Government made their submission to the ERDF only a few months ago they had to accept that unemployment in the north could hardly be reduced, if at all, under the present policies? Therefore, it is not just a case of a catastrophic fall in the value of manufacturing investment, which has been aided by the deliberate policy to cut the amount of regional assistance available to both incoming and indigenous industry, but a policy that has seen jobs lost in almost every sector in the north. In particular, these jobs have been lost in manufacturing at a time when small losses have been recorded by many of our industrial competitors, while in Japan the numbers of people in construction and manufacturing employment have risen.

In the short time available to me I wish to ask the Minister a number of questions that arise from the theme of the debate. We have heard mention of a number of reports that have been produced recently. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, instead of giving us some positive proposals, spent almost all the whole of his speech criticising a report called "It's Not Really Like That". There has been reference to a report by the Bishop of Durham, called "Response", and we have heard of one produced by the university.

The report to which I wish to draw the attention of the Minister is not by the Labour party, or by academics, whom the Conservatives are always criticising, but by the Government. It is their report to the ERDF, which I understand is to be the basis of discussion later this week. One would expect that such a report would give the Government's thinking about the northern economy and what might be done to assist it. We would expect such a report to be honest and fair in its treatment of the evidence.

The report does not identify, as the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) did, mass migration as a solution to the problems of the north. He must realise that that will weaken the economy of the north considerably. Even if incentives are given for people to move, the result is a fall in the population, the disappearance of skills and a diminishing of the chances of recovery. The report did not talk about the new fashionable solution, supported by the hon. Member for Darlington, of regional wage variations at a far greater level than we have at the moment.

The report said:

"The most important problem facing the area of the north is unemployment. The present high levels of unemployment are unacceptable but the situation will not improve until a number of more fundamental problems are solved."

These fundamental problems—I hope that the Minister will confirm that I am reading this accurately—are:

"a weak economic structure, inadequate infrastructure—more investment in particular is needed in communications, water supply and land drainage, gas, waste disposal, telecommunications, industrial land and modern industrial floorspace—an excess of unqualified manual workers and, a shortage of qualified people. Environmental dereliction; particular problems include the unsightly coastal area and the rundown appearance of some inner city areas."

Interestingly, the report goes on to say:

"one of the fundamental problems that needs to be solved before unemployment is going to fall is the social deprivation in the north, which requires more education and training facilities".

I hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security will note this: "It needs better health facilities, the absence of which is one reason for poorer standards of health in parts of the northern region."

Those are recommendations from a report that has been prepared by the Government and sent in the Government's name to the European regional development fund. Those recommendations are clear. What is needed is public investment in training and the infrastructure, a stimulation of manufacturing and private investment in the north and a co-ordinated approach by the Government. Those are the problems that need to be solved as a matter of urgency if unemployment is to be substantially reduced in the north.

The Opposition are committed to resolving the problems. That is why we have announced our determination to create the Northern Development Agency to co-ordinate a response on industrial infrastructure and industrial investment. It is also one of the reasons why our jobs programme is pledged to help the areas in greatest need, by providing the opportunity for training places at a far higher standard than that which exists at present. It is why our jobs programme also includes proposals for increasing the quality of community service and why there is our economic enterprise package.

The Opposition have the policies to resolve the problems of the north. The speeches that we have heard this morning from Conservative Members will do nothing but perpetuate the problems of the north. We have given the north a vote of confidence with our policy to create the Northern Development Agency. In my opinion, we have heard valedictory addresses from Conservative Members. What we need is an early general election so that we will have the opportunity to implement the policies that will solve the problems of the north.

8.1 am

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Giles Shaw): I have to give the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) full marks for rousing the House at 8 o'clock in the morning with his five colleagues alongside him giving a real reception for the new policies that the Labour party has just published. As is so often the case, it is too little, too late. As my hon. Friends the Members for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) and for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) have already said, the position in the northern region, the north-east in particular, has changed dramatically in the lifetime of this Government and there have been significant changes and improvements.

When the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East starts on his track asking why a report went to the European Community, compiled, as he knows, by the local authorities which have strong views on the matter, let me say to him that it is important to obtain sufficient investment from the European Economic Community, in

[The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry

addition to what the Government are already doing, to ensure that we get our share of regional development fund activities. I hope that we shall enjoy his full support in seeing that that happens.

My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington pointed out the important fact that there are already significant changes in the north-east that have to be recognised for what they are. First, there is a major shift in both attitude and action, and, secondly, there are the early signs of recovery in an area that has long been written off, certainly by the Opposition, as something that can no longer sustain its part in a vibrant and growing economy.

The important questions my hon. Friend put were: why do we not have a greater sense of what is possible, and why should there not be more confidence about the prospect of recovery in the north-east? I have to say to my hon. Friends, that the issue of the north-south divide is one of the biggest reasons why it is not easy to talk confidently about the north-east. There has been an overdose of utter gloom, despair and despondency, which has reached a level at which it is difficult to persuade people to take seriously the prospects of increasing life and opportunity in an area that has been allowed to receive the accolade of a desert north of Watford. The facts of the case are entirely the opposite. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington referred rightly to the fact that the first priority should be to get the national economy right, there is no substitute for providing that background against which any reasonable regional policy can be developed.

The economy is now moving in a direction that will allow substantial growth to occur in all regions. I understand that the facts about manufacturing investment cause great concern to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. He is absolutely right to express his concern. However, he will know of the shift that has occurred since 1983 in the rates of manufacturing investment. I am sure that he will be glad that even in the northern regions—the north-east, the north-west and Yorkshire and Humberside — the average increase in manufacturing investment was 20 per cent. in that one year alone. The national trends are still continuing.

The investment made by this Government in the form of assistance to the north-east is substantial. Total Government financial help for the year 1986-87 for the north-east will exceed £1 billion. Expenditure by my Department in the regional aid programme since 1979 has exceeded £800 million and has created or safeguarded over 90,000 jobs. The Department of the Environment has funded economic, social and environmental projects to the value of £300 million since 1979.

I recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington laid great stress on the importance of improving the environmental aspects of the north-east. Derelict land which has been one of the appalling legacies of industrial manufacturing over many years, has been high on the Department of the Environment's list. About 2,341 hectares of derelict land have been reclaimed since 1979 in that region alone. That is due to the imaginative use of the programme by this Government. About £1·25 million has been added to that programme so that in 1987-88 £14·25 million will be available to do just what my hon. Friends the Members for Darlington and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central want to see done. When we hear, as we have done from my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, about people's attitudes, it is not surprising that we get a bit fed up when we are doing as much as we possibly can to bring increased activity into that region.

When Fred Robinson produces his document, which I assume means that there is not much light at the end of Fred Robinson's tunnel, I do not think that we should give it much room. I am reminded of Stella Gibbons and her famous little book "Cold Comfort Farm", in which the four cows were called Aimless, Graceless, Feckless, and Pointless. That is probably a fair obituary for Fred Robinson's efforts in this matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh welcomed the development of urban development corporations. I hope that Opposition Members will welcome them because they are an imaginative way to try to get a co-ordinated approach in that area and to bring real resources to bear. I hope that he will maintain close contact with the UDC which will shortly be set up and working in the Teesside area. The one in the Tyneside area is already taking shape under the chairmanship of Mr. Nicholson, and I imagine that that too will be a large generator of activity in the region.

The main problems of the north-east stem from the long decline of structurally-based industries. I have to accept that. The hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) knows very well that the shipyards and heavy engineering which used to be the heart of industry in the north-east has declined over many years and is now in an extremely parlous state.

We must make absolutely certain that we bring new jobs and new investment into that part of the country. The hon. Member for Jarrow will be well aware of the efforts that have been made to bring investment into the country. I welcome the Northern Development Company and the hon. Gentleman's endorsement of it, not just as a more optimistic way of approaching the problem, but because it is a commitment, not just from the local authorities and central Government Departments, but because the private sector is coming in as well to provide a substantial generator. In the programme for the current year, more than £1 million will come from my Department for expenditure on the promotion and development of the north-east of England.

Therefore, I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington that, in relation to confidence and promotion, that new vehicle could not have arrived at a better time. We must look to it to demonstrate beyond doubt that in the north-east of England there is a large and vibrant prospect of further development.

We must contrast the decline in the structural industries which have served the country so well for so long with the massive increase, for example, in retailing and distribution. We must contrast the Metro centre in Gateshead which is the finest shopping centre in Europe with the declining industries with which it is surrounded. Marks and Spencer in Newcastle-upon-Tyne has the highest rates of sale outside the main shop in Baker street. That, too, contrasts sharply with perceptions of the north-east.

Mr. Dixon: Does the Minister accept that the NDC was the initiative, not the Government, but of Tom Burlison, the chairman of the northern TUC?

Mr. Shaw: I am delighted to pay tribute to Tom Burlison, whom I met on several occasions. I regard his

participation in the NDC as making a major contribution. The people in the north-east decided collectively that they wished to see an NDC, which is why it is rooted properly.

Clearly, in the north-east there is a major problem of exceptionally high unemployment which must be reduced. The initial fall has started, albeit almost imperceptibly. We now have in place substantial Government assistance for training schemes, derelict land, industrial investment and improved infrastructure. Of all the regions with which I am acquainted, the north-east undoubtedly has the best communications network. I accept that to get there, the A1 is the least desirable of all major trunk roads and my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh rightly drew attention to that. But, equally, he will know that there is a major programme of reformation work to be undertaken on the A1 to improve it.

I accept that at present there is still a large gap between the decline of the structural industries and the release of jobs, and the rise of new industries and the creation of new jobs. But there is now sufficient interest in new investment in the north-east, led by the Nissan project, which was a major threshold crossed, which means that with the axles already in place, the policies now being pursued and, above all, with the commitment to the economic development of the United Kingdom as a whole, we shall see better prospects for jobs and industries.

The greatest possible guarantee of that is that, despite all the enormous problems in the north-east, the people have a spirit and capacity to survive which is second to none. I visited Consett when the plant closed; we then spent £4 million clearing that site; and I can scarcely believe that in a relatively few years we have seen 1,250 jobs in new industry working out of the old Consett area. That is a tribute to the people, who at the end of the day will proudly carry their fortunes into the future.

Sussex Police

8.12 am

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): It has been a somewhat long wait since 3.30 pm yesterday to have the opportunity to raise the subject of the establishment of the Sussex police force. We have had a series of important but not heroic debates and I doubt whether anyone will join with Henry V in saying:

"And gentlemen in England, now a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here."

But our proceedings necessitate keeping a careful watch in case a debate unexpectedly comes to a conclusion and the opportunity to raise a matter of great concern to one's constituents is missed.

I am glad to raise this subject which concerns all my colleagues in east and west Sussex. The Government's policy on law and order is good and has been effectively developed since they came to office. I greatly welcome the considerable improvements in police pay and conditions. There has been an overall increase in technical resources and I am glad that the legislation before the House will enable higher courts to review what may be regarded as too lenient sentences in order to avoid the inadequate punishment of crimes.

I also welcome the increase in the prison building programme. Some time ago we were in a vicious spiral where a lack of accommodation might have led to lighter sentences than would otherwise have been passed. As a result, crime was increasing, convictions were going up and there was continuing pressure on accommodation. I hope that, with the improvement in the programme, appropriate sentences will be imposed and that that will provide an effective deterrent and the pressure on prison accommodation will be reduced correspondingly.

All of those factors are good from the national point of view. However, we must recognise the fact that there are considerable differences between the regions among the various provincial police forces. That gives me particular cause for concern. Like my constituents, I am worried about the recent crime figures.

I want to pay tribute to the splendid efforts made by the Sussex police force in all its operations and also to pay tribute to the response from the public to the crime alert system. It has received strong support from my constituents and from the local press and has had an impact on the general level of crime in my constituency and elsewhere in Sussex. During the night I wrote a letter to my hon. Friend the Minister who is to reply to the debate about the crime alert system. There are some problems about planning permission with respect to the appropriate posters that can be put up in areas subscribing to the crime alert arrangements. I look forward to receiving a reply to that point in due course; I do not expect to receive one this morning.

With others in west Sussex, I have been pressing for an increase in the establishment and size of the police force. There is especially a need to increase community policing. I made representations to the Minister and initially was glad to receive a reply and to read the press release issued by the Home Office on 10 March 1987 with the headline:

"More police officers for provincial forces."

I was particularly glad to read the final paragraph on the first page of the press release which stated:

[Mr. Terence Higgins]

"The increases are intended for use directly to enhance operational police strength, mainly in terms of increasing patrol cover and community policing in specific divisions where the workload is highest."

I welcomed that statement, together with the list of approvals for different provincial police forces which contained a figure of 66 for Sussex. I also noted that the report states that the

"increases for Dorset and Warwickshire meet in full the police authorities' applications for the next financial year. The increase for Staffordshire meets in full the remainder of the police authority's application for 52 posts."

On the face of it, it appeared that our requests had to some extent been met. Alas, I regret to say that our joy was short-lived. It is clear now, after going into the matter in greater depth, that the press release is, to say the least, grossly misleading.

As I understand it—and no doubt the Minister when he replies will tell me whether I am correct—all of the 66 mentioned in the press release are to go to meet the extra demands imposed by the opening of the new terminal at Gatwick airport. The whole number will be devoted to that purpose and not, as the press release states,

"directly to enhance operational police strength, mainly in terms of increasing patrol cover and community policing."

Worse than that, as I understand it, despite the requests otherwise made by the police authorities in Sussex, it will be necessary for an additional 21 special branch officers to be allocated to meet the further demands of Gatwick. The strain with regard to the overall police force outside Gatwick will be increased instead of being, as the press release implied, reduced.

There are other problems associated with the development. I understand that it will not be possible for the chief constable, who would normally have some flexibility in the allocation of resources, to have the same flexibility with officers allocated to Gatwick, partly for reasons that I shall give later and partly because of the strains which the Gatwick operation imposes with regard to drug control and general international problems.

I understand that the Sussex police force will also be required to train the extra officers at Gatwick, so there is an additional imposition on the force outside Gatwick. Gatwick is now the third largest international airport in the world. It is quite clearly a national responsibility. It is sheer chance that it is in Sussex rather than just across the border, for example, in Surrey. It is the concern of general transport policy.

The extra 66 officers are to be paid for by Gatwick Airport Ltd. They will not be an imposition on public funds. The impression given by the press release—that the Treasury is loosening the purse strings so that we can have more community policing in Sussex—is simply not true. There is no cost to the Exchequer for the 66 mentioned in the press release.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Not a penny piece.

Mr. Higgins: My hon. Friend is right. There will be a strain on local finances, however, because of the cost of training the 66 and of providing the extra special branch officers. I understand that there is some discussion about whether three extra custodial sergeants should be provided, but they have not been.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the absurdity surrounding the three additional sergeants to be used as custody officers is that they also would be paid for by Gatwick Airport Ltd.?

Mr. Higgins: The whole issue is incomprehensible. I do not understand what Home Office Ministers are thinking about. That is why I am grateful for this opportunity to put this issue on the record.

The Minister has a duty to bring about what his press release clearly said would be brought about. I shall not suggest that he should resign, but it might be appropriate for him to apologise for the way in which the matter has been handled. It is more important, however, that he puts the matter right. I hope that he is able to consult the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and to explain that the press release is misleading and that the legitimate requests of Sussex have in no way been met. Far from it, the strain on the police will be greater. It would therefore be appropriate for the Treasury to cover the situation created by Home Office Ministers.

It would be as well for the Minister to consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport who, by good fortune, is to visit the Sussex police headquarters next Friday. I believe that he will discuss traffic management and the like, but the visit will give him an opportunity to appreciate the strain that transport policy puts on the Sussex police.

Mr. Gow: Perhaps the Secretary of State will take the Chief Secretary with him.

Mr. Higgins: Perhaps it would be better if the Chief Secretary simply approved the increase.

The crucial point is that the Minister concerned should get together with his colleagues, whether they are in transport or in finance, and ensure that the requests for additional precincts, for increased patrol cover, and so on are met. Part of the problem arises from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and various issues involving custody officers, and so on.

I do not want to take too long, because many of my Sussex colleagues wish to speak. Clearly, not every one will be able to take part in what will be the shortest of our debates during the night—indeed, it is only about half the length of most of the other debates.

In the letter sent to me by the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department — my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) — when the announcement was first made, he referred partly to "civilianisation", or using civilian forces. The Sussex police have gone to great lengths to implement that policy, with considerable success, but they do not have great scope for proceeding further down that road.

I hope that my hon. Friend will give attention to that point. His letter of a few days ago is out of date. He should have checked on the situation. He understood that the existing establishment was not fully met and that there were problems with recruitment. I have checked and I understand that, although, that occurred earlier, it is not the case now. Moreover, I am assured that there would be no problems in recruiting and training those for whom the police authority had sought authorisation. The letter, which sought to pray in aid the fact that the existing establishment was not up to strength, is out of date and is no longer valid.

For all those reasons, I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister clearly has a duty to implement what the official statement issued by his Department clearly said would happen. Not only is that not true of Sussex, but the reverse is the case. My hon. Friends and I believe that this position should not continue. It must be put right at the earliest possible moment. I hope that, having carefully considered the matter and having realised the way in which it has been presented, my hon. Friend will tell us that he will agree forthwith to our modest requests, which have been made on a firm basis, or at the very least will say that he will consult his colleagues and come back to the House with a favourable reply for my Sussex colleagues and me. This is a matter of great concern to all our constituents. It should not have been handled as it has been handled.

8.27 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I welcome the debate, which was initiated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). It is notable that of all the debates that I have attended last night and this morning this is the best attended by hon. Members interested in the subject. That is a mark of our concern. I endorse what my right hon. Friend said about the Sussex police and what they do so admirably for the communities of Sussex, and also what he said about the local media, not just the local newspapers, but local radio, in supporting the police in controlling crime.

I should like to emphasise again some of the points made by my right hon. Friend. If our hon. Friend the Minister had listened to Sussex Members or, indeed, to the chief constable of Sussex as long ago as last December, he would have been assured that the force would be up to strength at the end of the fiscal year, which now means as of the end of this month. The chief constable gave my colleagues and me that reassurance then, and it has just been borne out by the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing.

The letter from the Home Office to the clerk to the Sussex police authority on 9 March said:

> "The Secretary of State suggests that consideration should be given to meeting the requirement of the remaining 37 posts in the police authority's latest application through civilianisation and recruiting close to the police establishment."

However, that was an excuse and will not do the trick.

On the matter of civilianisation, which has mentioned correctly by my right hon. Friend, that letter stated:

> "The Secretary of State has noted the continued progress in implementing the civilianisation programme in the Sussex Constabulary, the information provided with the police authority's latest application for additional police posts, that measures already taken have released the net equivalent of some 50 patrol officers, with more expected."

More are expected, and presumably they have been allowed for in the chief constable's plans. However, to step from that congratulatory tone to the expectation that the total requirement for 34 new officers could be met in one year is begging credibility.

My right hon. Friend referred to the increase in police numbers at Gatwick terminal. However, he did not emphasise sufficiently the fact that those extra officers do not represent a supplement to the existing police force at Gatwick—which is already doing a necessary job—but are to meet the specific requirements of the new terminal. That new requirement comes on stream at the end of next year. Therefore, it is all the more peculiar that the Home Office press release of 10 March says that the increase of 66 officers for Sussex would be used directly

"to enhance operational police strength"

throughout those areas that need it.

It is inconceivable that either through civilianisation or by recruiting up to strength the gap can be met between what is needed in West and East Sussex and the numbers that the Home Office is allowing for those areas. In future it may be possible to change the classification of those officers who serve Gatwick and who are recompensed by the British Airports Authority. That is something that would be applauded, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say something about that, but, it will do nothing to improve the position this year or next year, and it is probably unlikely that it will do anything to help in the year after that. Some action must be taken now.

The tragedy is that there is a requirement for more police both to assist the population in our constituencies in Sussex in the policing and control of crime, and to meet the dramatic increased strains on the police because of the upsurge of crime resulting from the use of drugs. The drugs problem pertains to Gatwick and also to Brighton. Sadly, it must be said that there is no place in the country—certainly no constituency in East or West Sussex—that is not touched by tragedy of drug misuse and associated crime.

The allocation of 66 officers was specifically identified for Gatwick. Indeed, the letter of 9 March states:

> "The Secretary of State approves an increase of 66 posts . . . for duties at Gatwick Airport."

That letter is not trying to mislead. Unfortunately, the Home Office press release is, at best, trying to mislead, or, at worst, covering up unacceptable actions. As a new day starts, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will shed new light on the decisions taken and apply himself to the necessary actions to put the matter right.

8.34 am

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): This is a bitter-sweet moment for me, because by participating in this debate I am squeezing myself out of a later one this morning. I am pleased, however, to have the opportunity to support entirely what my right hon. and hon. Friends have said.

The problem that we are debating has exercised the minds of Sussex Members over several months and has to be considered in relation to the recent crime figures. It is most unfortunate, to say the least, that at a time when there is great public anxiety over crime figures an announcement should be made to the effect that there will be a net reduction in the number of effective police on the ground.

Gatwick is a national need and it should be considered in that context. I am beginning to turn towards the idea of a national police force at least to execute responsibilities of the sort that apply at Gatwick. The arrangements that are being envisaged for Gatwick raise the question of drugs, which are a major problem at an airport which, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) said, is the third largest airport in the world. The connection between drugs and violent crime has been well demonstrated, and we want to help in Sussex and play our part. We want also to support what the Government are proposing to do as set out in the Criminal Justice Bill. I join my right hon. Friend in looking forward to the implementation of that legislation. The provisions on rape

[Mr. Michael Marshall]

and violent crime that will be coming before the House on Report are of the utmost significance in the wider context of the fight against crime.

At the end of the day, the public believe that the most effective deterrent against crime is police officers on the ground, as it were. It is worrying that apart from Gatwick needs, and even if our full request had been met, we would have seen only an additional 13 policemen available for general duties throughout West and East Sussex. Surely that is not asking a great deal.

It must be said that the Sussex police are being asked to carry out an increasingly difficult and sophisticated task. Perhaps there has been a shift away from policemen on the ground over a long period. I have gone into the issues carefully, as have my right hon. and hon. Friends, and I am quite satisfied that a modest request was made. I must tell my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State —I do so more in sorrow than in anger— that his enthusiasm, which we all applaud greatly in many regards, has in this instance been misplaced. There is no doubt that he has aroused expectations. We have all sought to assure our constituents that the Government were taking the representations seriously. Therefore, as I said at the outset, to have to say that we shall suffer a net loss in police manning at a time when the crime figures are showing increases of a worrying nature is singularly unfortunate.

I shall conclude because I know that some of my hon. Friends are anxious to participate in the debate. If we bear in mind Sussex police activity and the way in which the neighbourhood crime watch programmes have gone ahead, there is evidence of splendid co-operation between the public and the police. There is an excellent relationship between the police and all the local communities in Sussex. One of the areas in which they would all want to join us today is in once more praising the work of the police, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) did, and saying that they must be given support. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take the opportunity of saying that he will consider again something that has not met the needs of our county.

8.38 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I support my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and my two hon. Friends who have taken part in the debate, my hon. Friends the Members for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) and for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). There is unanimity in the counties of West Sussex and East Sussex among every Member of Parliament about the need to meet the modest request which has been made by the police authority and the chief constable for new manning levels for next year.

I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends that Sussex Members had a meeting with the chief constable on 19 December 1986. That was followed by a letter dated 9 January, less than a month later, from the chief constable. All of my hon. Friends will agree that in Mr. Birch we have an outstanding chief constable. Indeed, he has won the admiration and respect of those who serve under his command and of all of my right hon. and hon. Friends. It is not least because of his remarkable qualities as a police officer that we feel that special consideration should be given to his request, endorsed as it is by the police authority.

In his letter to me of 9 January the chief constable wrote —I think that he wrote to all of my hon. Friends on the same day—

"In November 1985 the Sussex Police Authority approved an increase in establishment of 66 officers for the policing of the North Terminal at Gatwick Airport. That increase has not yet been approved by the Home Office because of the delay in the opening of the North Terminal. We do expect to receive approval for that increase within the next few weeks."

It took a bit longer than that. The chief constable went on to state:

"Gatwick Airport Ltd. will fund the whole of that increase".

That point was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and repeated by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes, in whose constituency the police headquarters are situated.

I cannot understand how my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary can continue to assert that the number of policemen required specifically and exclusively for Gatwick airport—paid for by not a penny piece from anywhere except from Gatwick Airport Ltd.—should be a charge against our police establishment. Such an argument would have done credit to Lewis Carroll, but it does no credit to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Benches. The chief constable went on to state:

"The Review of the Force indicated a minimum and immediate need for an extra 134 officers just to allow us to stand still in levels of service."

That was at a time of a tragic increase in crime. On 20 February, the chairman of the Sussex police authority wrote to hon Members in East and West Sussex. He stated:

"The delay in the issue of Home Office approval is causing us some concern, and has prompted this letter to you with a request for your assistance."

The chairman of the police authority went on to state that after the 66 and the 21 required for special branch duties "this then leaves only 13 to provide extra men on the beat for the whole of the remainder of East and West Sussex."

I remind the House that, for the purposes only of the police authority, the counties of East and West Sussex are combined. They have a rising population. Alas, the tendency to crime is not diminishing as time proceeds. On 24 February, I wrote to the Home Secretary in these terms:

"We had a meeting with the chief constable on 19 December 1986, at which we were all persuaded"—

that is to say, my right hon. and hon. Friends—

"that it was absolutely necessary for you to approve an increase of 100 in the authorised establishment of the Force for the coming financial year."

That increase of 100 only means an extra 13 policement actually on the beat. That is the point that we seek to put to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State.

I take part in the debate with great sadness. I find myself in serious disagreement with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. There is no Minister with whom I would more prefer not to be in disagreement. But it is possible for my hon. Friend to put right a matter that is causing deep concern to all of us. I say this in a spirit of great friendliness to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. Mr. Speaker is in the Chair. He is a saintly man. He and my hon. Friend will remember the advice given by our Lord: "Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him."

We must leave aside issues of friendship. Hon. Members who represent East and West Sussex will be

importunate in bringing this matter again and again to the attention of the House, and, if necessary, in a further Adjournment debate next week and the week after that, until the legitimate claims of the police authority, the chief constable and the people of East and West Sussex have been met.

8.44 am

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): It is very difficult to follow the compelling rhetoric of my right hon. and hon. Friends who represent constituencies in West and East Sussex. However, from my standpoint in the western part of West Sussex—mine is a very large constituency of approximately 600 square miles—there is consternation that the increase in funding and the manpower provision for police forces has not been translated into a larger complement of police officers. The House should be aware that in fulfilling their duties very special strains are being placed on the existing establishment. The personal dedication of the divisional commanders and of those who serve under them has been outstanding during a period of increased strain and pressure.

Few members of the public realise how gallantly the police have fulfilled their responsibilities during the past year. Many people are also unaware of the fact that large areas of the county are not policed for long periods. It is alarming but nevertheless true that on some occasions the whole of the northern part of my constituency, north of the Downs, has only one police officer on duty at certain times of the night. That is an area of over 300 square miles, with a very large population. That police officer has to respond to whatever incidents may arise in the area.

One of the problems is that the increase in legislative requirements has imposed a paperwork responsibility on the police that has taken them away from the sharp end of their responsibilities. Those problems were highlighted when we met my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department and when we corresponded with him. In the rural constituencies people are concerned about the fact that the increase in police manpower appears to be for Gatwick. That is some way away from the area that I represent. They fear that 13 additional police officers for both counties will not be translated into a significant or meaningful increase in manpower in my own very large constituency.

There is great concern about the increase in crimes against property. Those whose homes are burgled believe that nothing can be done about them. The clear-up rate remains, sadly, remarkably low, despite the efforts of the police. There is great concern about burglaries in the city of Chichester. During the past week the parish council of Westbourne has written to me about vandalism and about the need for a police officer to be on the spot to try to prevent vandalism and other crimes. There are student and tourist centres in Chichester where there has been an increase in drugs-related offences with which the police have to cope.

My constituency is not alone among the constituencies of East and West Sussex in attracting major events of one kind and another. That leads to a diversion of police effort and to a major demand on police manpower.

For these reasons, my hon. Friend must respond to the requests that have been made today. It will not be enough for him to explain why the proposals he has already announced will be sufficient. I hope that he recognises the pressure of public feeling and the unanimity of the concern that has been expressed by Members of Parliament with Sussex constituencies and that he will respond positively to the serious problem with which we and our constituents are faced.

8.48 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): As only 12 minutes are left for me to reply to this debate, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will understand that I shall be unable to deal as fully as I should have wished with the very important points that they have raised.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have done a great service for their constituents by the way in which they have argued the case for an increase in the police establishment in Sussex. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and my hon. Friends the Members for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), for Arundel (Mr. Marshall), for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) have pressed me on this matter. So have all the other Members who represent Sussex constituencies, notably my right hon. and hon. Friends the Members for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle), Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), Crawley (Mr. Soames) and Hove (Mr. Sainsbury). They have all pressed me on this matter in forceful terms.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will forgive me if I make a few general observations before turning to the particular. In national terms, in January 1987 we had the highest ever police manpower of 122,100. Taking 1979 as a benchmark, the total forces that are available to the police in England and Wales have increased by 16,300. Again, taking the benchmark of January 1987 as against May 1979, we now have an average deficiency of 1·3 per cent. in forces with fewer than 1,600 vacancies which contrasts with the position of May 1979 of an average deficiency of 6·5 per cent. and 7,600 vacancies.

In 1987-88 we expect to spend on the police service 46 per cent. more in real terms than was spent in 1978-79. I say that to demonstrate the Government's commitment in real terms to the police service. Moreover — this is relevant to the issue before us — it is our policy to continue that expansion.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and my hon. Friends will bear in mind that in May 1986 my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced a policy of continuing recruitment for the police. He announced —this is the important part—an increase in the non-metropolitan force of 500 a year. That is the measure of the increase that can be announced year on year in terms of increased establishment.

In the case of the Sussex constabulary, the 66 officers are being funded by the British Airports Authority, which, to use a colloquialism, is a third party; it is not a direct arm of Government. Hitherto and historically, when calculating manpower levels for public expenditure purposes, we have always included in the police maximum figure those officers who are paid for by third parties. They swell and form part of the number. That applies also to the 500 per year by which we have committed ourselves to increase police posts.

Mr. Gow: We should not.

Mr. Hogg: I hear my hon. Friend say that we should not. May I give a justification? The justification at the

[Mr. Hogg]

moment — I realise that this may be a temporary situation — is that establishments are used to calculate the grant-related expenditure assessment formula whereby rate support grant is paid to the counties. At the moment —I do not want to place too much emphasis on this because it may change—the police establishment is used as the basis for calculating the support that is paid to police authorities. Therefore, for that reason only, the policemen who are paid for by third parties cannot be ignored. But if we stripped that element out and said that policemen who are paid for by third parties should not count towards the GREA formula, that argument goes.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have focused my mind directly on the question whether officers who are paid for by third parties should count towards the ceiling and, a fortiori, should then count towards the annual increase of 500. This has been a longstanding convention. That is not an argument for continuing it, but many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have more experience in government than I and they will appreciate that a convention that has been in place for quite a long time may take some shifting and may prove impossible to shift. The decision does not rest exclusively with me or the Home Office. I shall look seriously and carefully at the argument. If we can properly move on this matter we will, but I cannot give any short-term commitments. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, who had great experience in the Treasury, will appreciate that many considerations have to be taken into account. I promise to look at the matter seriously and conscientiously because I am aware of the force of the argument.

The next question is about Sussex itself. The Sussex constabulary applied for 103 posts — 66 officers, and three custody sergeants at Gatwick, 21 special branch people for Gatwick operating from February 1988, and 13 general patrol officers. My hon. Friends have spoken about the announcement that I made on 10 March. That was an important step towards the implementation of the 500-a-year increase.

The effect of that announcement, together with the other allocations that are presently in the pipeline and those which were carried through from the preceding year —of which there were, I think, 98—have left me with 52 police posts to allocate during the rest of 1987-88. Taking account of the March announcement, including the 66 to Sussex, I have only 52 for the remainder of the year. That is the constraint on me, and I hope that my hon. Friends will take that into account.

Mr. Higgins: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: I apologise, but I cannot give way. I have only five minutes in which to make one or two further points.

As I have said, that constraint operates on me and it operates on the Home Office. As my hon. Friends have said or at least implied, hitherto the force in Sussex has not been up to establishment. In 1985, taking quarterly figures, the average deficiency was 31. In 1986 it was 44·5. In February 1987 there were 15 vacancies. We are not yet wholly certain that by the end of this year the force will be up to establishment.

I should like to make two points about that. First, it is right that the force should be brought up to establishment, and, secondly, if it is brought up to establishment, it will mean that the deficiency of 44·5 has been eliminated. Therefore, another 44 officers will be available for general policing duties in Sussex. That is a positive expansion in the number of police officers available.

There is another point on civilianisation. In the chief constable's report dated 20 November, he identifies as a result of the progress of civilianisation a net increase of 50 constable posts, and he says that there are more in the pipeline. I do not know how many are in the pipeline until I make inquiries. Let us say that the figure is 15. That means that we are talking about an increase of 65 available for general policing duties.

Over a short time Sussex has got, by way of an increase in general policing duties, the 50 that have been civilianised plus those that are in the pipeline — say 15 for the purpose of the illustration, which gives a total of 65— plus the eradication of the deficiency. That makes a total of about 100. I must take that into account.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing has put his argument very clearly, and I understand its force. First, I have asked the inspectorate to go back to Sussex to check in detail what has happened to the civilianised posts, how many are in the pipeline, what will happen to them and what has happened to the 50 that were deployed at the end of last year. Secondly, I shall ask the inspectorate to check the exact level of vacancies, if any. There may be none.

Mr. Higgins: There is none.

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. Friend says that there is none, in which case that will be in the report. My advice two or three days ago was that there were vacancies. I am perfectly prepared to accept that there is none, but I want it checked. That is not unreasonable. I want to ascertain whether Sussex is certain that it will maintain that level. Thirdly, I shall ask the inspectorate to reassess the need for the remaining 37 unapproved posts and also the time at which there will be a real need for those 37. As my right hon. Friend will appreciate, the 21 special branch officers are not required to be operational until February 1988.

I can give my right hon. Friend no commitments. I am operating within the constraints that I mentioned. In particular, I have a limit of 52. But my right hon. and hon. Friends have put the argument extremely forcefully. No one could have done more than they have. I am not, I think, being a total fool. I have taken account of what they have said and, insofar as I can properly and reasonably help them, I shall do so. That is a commitment of good will. I am afraid that I cannot put a quantity on that assurance.

Mr. Rathbone: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unfortunately, following my hon. Friend's reply, I have to give notice to the House that I shall seek to raise this matter again on the Adjournment.

It being Nine o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Dairy Farming (Wales)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

9 am

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): Farming is very important in many parts of the United Kingdom, but in no part is it more important than in south-west Wales. Although I welcome the presence of the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, and am agreeable to having this debate with him, in Dyfed and throughout Wales there will be disappointment that the Secretary of State, who normally handles agriculture questions in respect of Wales, is not here to reply to the debate.

In five of the six districts in south-west Wales, now known as the old county of Dyfed, one in five people directly or indirectly depends upon agricultural production for his livelihood. Because of topography and rainfall, agriculture on the western side of the United Kingdom relies heavily upon grassland enterprises. There is little scope for diversification into other types of farming. The activity must be exclusively or predominantly dairy.

The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, in a recent report to a bankers' seminar, revealed that fully half of our dairy farms have serious financial problems, which were defined as low profitability and increasing debts. Profitability has still not regained the levels of the early 1980s. Overall in Dyfed, 8 per cent. of people are employed directly in agriculture, compared with 2·4 per cent. for Wales and 1·6 per cent. for the remainder of the United Kingdom.

The expansion in the dairy industry in the decade up to 31 March 1984 happened in Wales far later than it did elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Between 1981 and 1983, Welsh milk output expanded by 25 per cent.—two and a half times the average British increase. Therefore, the House will understand that when quotas were introduced on 1 April 1984 the effect was disproportionately catastrophic in those areas of south-west Wales. Cuts averaging 6·2 per cent. were imposed in the first year, and a further 1 per cent. cut followed in 1985-86, because the base year chosen for the calculation of quotas—1981—was disastrous climatically for the United Kingdom, and we suffered one of the largest cuts in Europe. That seems especially unjust since the United Kingdom is still not self-sufficient in milk products, and countries producing considerably more than their market requirements suffered lower cuts.

Sudden policy changes allow no transition and no adaptation, and the British Government do not appear to use their discretionary powers to ameliorate the suddenness of policy changes, whereas the Governments of other member nations certainly do.

In December 1986, the Council of Ministers' package, hailed in the House by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as an important breakthrough, acceptable to and accepted by all member nations, was confined mainly to milk, beef and agri-money. The Council of Ministers agreed that between April 1987 and March 1989 we would have further quota cuts and reductions of 9·5 per cent. The Minister will be aware that there has not been a widespread welcome in south-west Wales. On the contrary, this has come on top of two and a half years of widespread and serious financial difficulties, with many farmers forced out of business and others struggling through bleak, tempestuous times, with the knock-on effects producing austere prospects for an already depressed rural economy.

The late 1986 package will add appreciably to an already critical position, for Welsh farmers are adamant that solutions to the problems of overproduction weigh far too heavily upon those innocent of their creation. As a consequence, milk production in England and Wales in 1988-89 will be only 4 per cent. above the level of 1973 when we joined the EEC. By contrast, German milk production will be 14 per cent. up, Netherlands production will be 23 per cent. up and the Republic of Ireland will be 63 per cent. better off with regard to milk production than in 1973.

Because the domestic markets for liquid milk, cheese and other products must still be supplied, the main impact of the cuts in milk output falls now upon butter milk production. It is estimated that the latest package of quota cuts will reduce the current England and Wales milk supplies by 1·5 billion litres by the end of 1989. That is equivalent to a cut of 40 per cent. in the volume of milk currently being used for butter manufacture. I need hardly remind the Minister that cheese creamery production in south-west Wales disappeared with the closure of Newcastle Emlyn just after the 1983 election and the subsequent closure of the cheese creamery at Johnstown. Now we are concerned about the future of the butter creameries in south-west Wales. In one there has been considerable investment and expansion and in the other, which is just outside my constituency, there are great fears for the future.

The direct loss to the rural economy will be of the order of £280 million, with knock-on effects estimated at another £200 million. Butter factories are traditionally situated on the western side of this country where they are close to the milk supplies and, generally, they are situated in the smaller rural communities rather than in the major conurbations.

A total of 56 per cent. of Welsh milk production will go into butter making and the corresponding figure for England and Wales as a whole is around 30 per cent. One will realise, therefore, the predicament we are in and the fears that we have in south-west Wales. A further cut in milk production will undoubtedly affect farmers' returns. Eighty per cent. of milk is produced by 20 per cent. of producers. Therefore, there is a likelihood that cutbacks in production could be substantially greater than the 10 per cent. envisaged. The package will have an immediate effect upon producer returns.

In an oral reply on Monday the Secretary of State talked about

"across-the-board compulsory reductions in quotas".—[*Official Report*, 23 March 1987; Vol. 113, c. 10.]

because of the failure of the outgoers scheme. It would have been in the general interests of the milk industry and the majority of producers who wish to remain in milk production that the 3 per cent. quota reduction be achieved from a successful outgoers scheme. One asks what has to be done further to make the outgoers scheme succeed. It is essentially a redundancy payments scheme.

In the industrial context, in south-west Wales over the past nine years or so we have been dealing with redundancy payments in the steel industry and in the coal and other heavy industries. The farming community is wondering why it cannot be given equal treatment with a redundancy payments scheme. We have a redundancy

[Dr. Roger Thomas]

payments scheme of 27p per litre. That is insufficient. It is also insufficient in that it is paid over seven years. If the outgoers scheme was such that there would be an immediate lump sum payment to cover the first three or four instalments, people would have a sufficient amount of cash flow in order to diversify into other forms of industry, within farming and outside it, now that they have to leave dairy farming. Such a scheme could be used to assist farmers who have been badly treated by the milk quota schemes, rather than provide quota, as has been happening, for Northern Ireland.

The industry is fully aware of the advantages of a quota transfer scheme. However, the current scheme is causing problems in respect of the movement of quota away from south Wales. The rate of loss escalated during the latter months of 1986 and the early months of 1987. Therefore, there is a limit on the amount of quota that can be purchased in future in Dyfed.

The current price of the quota, at more than 30p per litre, is a disincentive to the outgoers scheme. Current schemes involving the transfer of quota, especially the "grass let" system, needs detailed policing. Illegal transfers of quota are strongly opposed. All future transfers of quota should be administered by the milk marketing board and profiteering by auctioneers and quota agents should be prohibited.

The initial England and Wales quota should be brought in line with that administered to other member states on the basis of the ratio of production to consumption. The initial quota allocation to England and Wales is inadequate.

There is concern about the suspension of intervention, which will have a detrimental effect on the wholesale producer price. More information is needed about the workings of intervention throughout the EEC. In future, intervention buying should operate as a safety net, in terms of seasonal surplus production, and not as a market regulator. We agree that the level of intervention stocks in the EEC calls for an urgent and immediate disposal policy. Details of such schemes are urgently needed. There is a need for producers, Government and farmers to enter into schemes to promote the consumption of milk and dairy products.

The discrepancy in the agri-money system was fully highlighted in the December 1986 package. The Government should be more prepared to adjust the green pound to support British agriculture and especially family farms in what is a competitive market.

Current interest rates have been reduced, but bank charges still place farmers in impossible financial situations. Interest rates in the United Kingdom should be more competitive with those that are now available in other parts of the EEC. Our interest rate is 10 per cent. whereas West Germany's is 4 per cent.

As I have said, the Brussels package is designed to cut milk production by 10 per cent. However, the knock-on effects on other sectors of the industry will be devastating, especially in the grassland sector. The package will mean off-loading 600,000 tonnes of cow beef. That can be translated into 25,000 barren cows being off-loaded in the market area of Dyfed alone. That off-loading of cow beef will affect the already depressed beef market.

A 10 per cent. reduction in production is bound to affect the creamery capacity in Dyfed. How many creameries can the industry effectively support in that part of the world? The United Kingdom beef cow herd is already in decline. Without a substantial increase in the suckler cow premium the decline will continue. The headage premium on beef cows in less favoured areas should be raised to the maximum allowed under the EEC directive. All EEC countries will now have a production premium, but only the United Kingdom is charged clawback on its exports.

If an EEC policy directive appears harsh and politically explosive, certain member states are all too ready to support their agriculture and farmers by national means. Farming in the United Kingdom is worthy of similar treatment to keep its competitiveness. However, there is an extreme reluctance on the part of the Government to support agriculture and the rural economy. It should be noted that the Commission continues to make further proposals for the milk sector, hence the great fears that lie ahead for the farmers of south-west Wales. It is already resisting a further realistic devaluation of the green pound. If such measures are implemented and supinely accepted by our negotiators in Brussels, it will have further serious effects on the dairy industry and the rural economy.

Dyfed believes that it is vital that the Government should recognise those consequences and take whatever steps are necessary to mitigate them. The Government should help others whose employment has been affected adversely by EEC measures by paying appropriate compensation to farm workers, creamery workers and workers in the cattle-feed industries.

In Dyfed we already have evidence that the amount of feed accepted by farmers is decreasing. Since the 1982 quotas there has been an annual loss of £13 million in incomes in Wales as a result of the changes, and 1,700 jobs have been lost. If the changes of 1986 are implemented, there will be a further £11 million annual loss of oncome in south-west Wales and a further loss of 1,100 jobs. This haemorrhaging of the economy and work of the area cannot be allowed to continue.

9.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): I fully recognise and acknowledge the concern of the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) to ensure that the House is made fully aware of the problems facing grassland farmers in Wales and in Dyfed in particular, and the constructive thought that is being given to resolving their difficulties by the Dyfed co-ordinating committee and local union representatives.

The hon. Gentleman went into the difficulties of overproduction and the history behind today's problems. I do not share his view that the Government have been lackadaisical in their support for farmers. He will be the first to accept that the problems of overproduction and surpluses are difficulties that the Government have had to tackle. I remind him that when quotas were introduced the Labour party criticised the Government, saying that they were not doing enough to tackle the surplus problem.

I also welcome the recognition implied in the hon. Gentleman's remarks that changes have to take place in farming due to the immense forces of technological progress, surpluses and costs. I congratulate him, too, on his good fortune in securing an Adjournment debate on a day when the House has been up all night, and when there was a fixed time for its conclusion, thereby allowing him and me a few hours' sleep.

In opting to have a debate on this subject, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman shares my anxiety that there should be wide public discussion on the comprehensive and far-reaching measures recently announced by my right hon. Friends the Agriculture Ministers and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Those proposals attempt to get to grips with the problems facing farmers and to tackle some of the problems that the hon. Gentleman illustrated. The initial announcement on 9 February, unfortunately, gave rise to much ill-founded and misleading criticism, particularly in relation to the guidance issued on the future planning regime for agricultural land. However, the package of documents issued on 10 March shows that these misgivings were misconceived.

The steps we have already taken and the new proposals we have announced contain provisions to encourage alternative use of farmland, increase diversity on farms and in the rural economy generally and to enhance environmental protection. These measures will help and encourage farmers to farm in a way which is sensitive to conservation and also provide an alternative source of income to offset the pressures to reduce agricultural surpluses. I am sure such policies are well in accord with the hon. Gentleman's arguments.

To reflect the present situation of commodity surpluses and facilitate diversification, the Government also intend to issue new guidance to local planning authorities in England and Wales for development involving agricultural land. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and the Environment issued a draft circular for consultation last month. The new guidance stresses the need to consider the agricultural implications of proposals in conjunction wth environmental and wider economic aspects. Planning authorities will continue to use their power responsibly and the Department will retain the right to object to specific developments.

On 1 March this year we introduced the environmentally sensitive area scheme in the Cambrian mountains. This will enable farmers with land in the ESA — of whom there are more than 450—with 300 in Dyfed—to enter into management agreements for the protection of semi-natural rough grazing, hay meadows, broadleaved woodland and archaeological features. We see this new concept—which, as a result of our initiatives, has now been adopted by the European Community to its socio structures package—as a valuable means of protecting some of our most beautiful landscapes without detriment to the well-being of the farmer.

It is now widely accepted that technological progress and the incentives provided under the CAP have created levels of production for many commodities which are far outstripping demand. The cost, of providing, storing and disposing of surpluses have mounted to unacceptable levels. At the same time CAP policies have also resulted in farming in this country and the rest of the Community becoming highly dependent on public financial support.

The annual review of agriculture White Paper published in January this year shows that expenditures, even excluding those on items such as research, animal disease, advice and education averaged £1·7 billion per annum in the five years to 1986-87. I believe that that is evidence of our support for the farming community. The published figures for planned expenditures also show the continued commitment of this Government to the agriculture industry.

The contribution made by grants and subsidies to grassland farming in Dyfed is amply demonstrated by the available figures. In 1985 and 1986, capital grants paid in Dyfed totalled £13·2 million out of which £2·4 million was for grassland improvements. In the 1985 marketing year, sheep annual premium amounted to £5·9 million and suckler cow premium payments in the 1985-86 scheme year totalled just over £500,000. Although figures for beef and sheep variable premium are not available on a county basis, it is evident from the amounts paid out in Wales as a whole that these are also important elements of support for the beef and sheep farmers of Dyfed.

In addition to these grants and subsidies, headage payments in the form of hill livestock compensatory allowances are also vital to many farmers in Dyfed, particularly since the extension in the less favoured areas which we secured in 1984. An additional 44 per cent. of the county was given LFA status then and 397,000 hectares or 81 per cent. of Dyfed is now in the LFA. In 1986 HLCAs paid to Dyfed farmers amounted to almost £6 million. These rates have in effect doubled since 1979.

Farming in Dyfed and elsewhere has also benefited from our success in curbing inflation. I am sure the recent fall in interest rates will also be welcome by all farmers. I note that the hon. Gentleman referred to the effect of high interest rates in his county.

Before dealing with specific aspects of milk quotas, it might be helpful if I remind the House about the scale and urgency of the problem. The hon. Gentleman discussed the problem of dealing with surplus stocks in Community intervention stores. Even with milk quotas in place, the Community has an extremely serious milk surplus — estimated by the Commission at 9·5 million tonnes or 9·5 per cent. even after allowing for the continuation of heavily subsidised exports as well as expensive disposal schemes on the Community market. If these were taken out, the surplus would be more than 20 per cent.

Last year the EC's funds were increased by 40 per cent. but this has already been spent and we are facing a prospective overspend in 1987 of some £2,500 million, almost entirely because of agriculture.

Half the total financial budget of the Community is spent on storage and disposal of surpluses which have to compete for a share of a diminishing world market. It is not only the EC's stores which are full and not only farmers in Europe who face the problem of vast over-production. Faced with such stark facts, the choice was and is painfully simple—either spending on Community agriculture is controlled, or the Community heads for early bankruptcy, which would help nobody. The difficulties which that would produce are clear for all to see.

The CAP must be reformed to bring supply closer towards what available markets can absorb. This is, however, a long-term task requiring persistence and sensitivity. I am only too well aware of the long-term nature of much livestock production, and for many years we have argued long and hard in Brussels for reasonable price restraint as the method to bring milk and other surplus production back into line with demand. I still believe that this would have been the best solution for the milk industry but, sadly, our community partners were not willing to go down this road and, as a result quotas had to be introduced.

I know that there is a view in the industry that, because we are not fully self-sufficient in dairy production, quota

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

cuts are unfair, but the fact is that the United Kingdom makes a significant contribution to the milk surplus. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the problems of creameries in his constituency. We currently hold the second largest stocks in the Community of both butter and skimmed milk powder: In 1985, 46 per cent. of all butter made in the United Kingdom was sold into intervention. Moreover, in 1985 domestic production was equivalent to nearly 90 per cent. of butterfat consumption in the United Kingdom and 113 per cent. of solids-not-fat, the other main component of milk. In these circumstances, there is no justification for the United Kingdom not to share equally with other member states the burden of solving a common problem.

Faced with quotas cuts, some have argued for a reduction in imports from New Zealand, but there is no link between the special arrangements for the import of New Zealand butter and cheese and the quota system. I thought that I should take this opportunity to make that point.

Quota transfers have enabled individual farmers to make better use of their resources, but I am well aware of the concern about the sale of quota out of Wales. It is important to see this issue in perspective. The net movement is very small. During the period 1 April 1985 to 17 February 1987, the movement of quota in and out of Wales, as recorded by the milk marketing board, showed that overall Wales had a net loss of only 8·3 million litres, or 0·54 per cent. of the total quota allocated to holdings in Wales.

It would not be to our advantage to break our England and Wales quota into smaller, fixed, regional quotas. Most, if not all, other member states envy our being able to treat England and Wales as one single dairy, and we would be loth to lose that advantage. All transfers of quota are registered with the milk marketing board which maintains the quota register.

Action to reduce surplus stocks is taking place on three fronts—first, a reduction in output through the agreed cuts in quota; secondly, amendments to the intervention system to reduce it to its proper role of a safety net support for the market; and, finally, special stock disposal measures. These disposal measures are designed to reduce intervention stocks of butter by 1 million tonnes over the next two years and will then considerably ease the financial burden which they have imposed on the Community budget.

On beef, the December settlement reduced the industry's wholly unrealistic dependence on intervention. This was the right decision. No one can defend 700,000 tonnes of good beef in cold stores. The effect on the United Kingdom will be much less than elsewhere. We succeeded in retaining the beef variable premium scheme for two years. That was a very considerable achievement.

As for sheep, I can understand the fears of sheep producers about milk producers switching to sheep production as an alternative form of income to offset quota cuts. I am aware that the industry is considering quotas on sheepmeat, and it is right that it should consider such possibilities, but the issues involved here are complicated and we are still a long way from self-sufficiency in this sector. The problems of quota are well known. They inhibit the enterprise and rational development of an industry, and the industry needs to be clear what it is proposing when it discusses this difficult issue.

As part of the December package, we also secured a hard-won devaluation in the green rate. We continue to keep the level of the green rate under review and are mindful of the disadvantages of the present large MCAs for our farmers and traders.

These are important and complex issues which the hon. Member has brought before the House. I hope that I have reassured him both of our commitment to reforming the CAP and to helping the industry adapt to the changes which farming must face if the CAP is to be put on a sounder long-term footing. The package of measures announced on 10 March and our continued vigilance to ensure that measures agreed in Brussels do not discriminate unfairly against our farmers will go a long way towards securing this objective.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Nine o'clock on Wednesday morning.

House of Commons

Wednesday 25 March 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Westland plc

1. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to respond to the Trade and Industry Committee's report on Westland plc.

8. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to reply to the report of the Trade and Industry Committee on Westland plc.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): Yesterday I wrote to the Chairman of the Committee with the Government's response to the report.

Mr. McWilliam: Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether that response contained an acceptance that an illegal concert party was in operation? Does he recommend that the Select Committee's view on transparency in share dealings should be taken so that such illegal activity is not possible in the future?

Mr. Channon: It is for the Select Committee rather than for me to reveal the exact reply that I gave, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman—I do not think that the Committee will mind if I do—that it made two recommendations, one of which related to the disclosure of material interests. I said that those were being examined under the review of the operation of the takeover panel that I announced to the House on 28 January.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Secretary of State aware that Government policy has led to the loss of 1,800 jobs at Westland? Does he think that Government aid will be required?

Mr. Channon: I have no reason to assume that the company will require Government aid. The company had an extremely good year last year, and I hope that it has a prosperous future ahead of it.

Mr. Warren: I was very pleased yesterday to receive my right hon. Friend's reply, which has been placed before the Committee. We shall be considering his response, and I hope that the Government will not hesitate to make the kind of progress that the Committee has called for, especially in relation to business ethics, with which the Committee is particularly concerned.

Mr. Channon: I hope that the review will be completed by the end of April. I shall inform the House of the Government's conclusions at a very early date.

Sir Peter Emery: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we are to be able to obtain information about the ultimate beneficial owners of shares hiding behind nominees and other banks, we shall need legislation to bring that about?

Mr. Channon: That may well be so. I would not rule that out. However, I should like to wait for the review before making recommendations to the House.

Mr. Crowther: In view of the undertaking that the Secretary of State has already given about limiting the ownership of Rolls-Royce shares to 15 per cent., is it not essential that legislation on the lines just referred to should be introduced before he proceeds with the privatisation of Rolls-Royce?

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is another question about Rolls-Royce. This question is about Westland.

Mr. Crowther: With respect, Mr. Speaker, the recommendation concerns not only Westland, but companies in general. I submit that my question is in order.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman should reserve his fire until we reach the question on Rolls-Royce.

Dr. Hampson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the prospects of the helicopter division of Westland are linked closely with European collaboration? Will he confirm rumours in Europe that the British Government are not to proceed with collaboration on the NH 90?

Mr. Channon: With respect, I feel that that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I know that my right hon. Friend intends to make a statement to the House about helicopters soon.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does the Secretary of State recall assuring the Select Committee a year ago this month that he was watching the stock exchange inquiry "like a hawk"? Now that the stock exchange inquiry and the Select Committee have both concluded that the absence of a concert party strains their credulity, would it not be appropriate for him to try swooping "like a hawk"? Is it not now abundantly clear to those who want to see that the Sikorsky deal was secured by Rupert Murdoch and Lord Hanson being prepared to pay over the odds for enough shares to secure the result that the Prime Minister wanted? Is not the real reason why there was no DTI inquiry into those share dealings that they both had more influence at Downing street than the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

Mr. Channon: If the hon. Gentleman believes that, he will believe anything.

Budget Proposals

2. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what effect he estimates the Budget proposals will have on the level of United Kingdom trade and commercial activity during 1987.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I expect the Budget proposals to contribute to a seventh successive year of growth in the economy.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the latest CBI survey bears out the Chancellor's statement that the prospects for output and exports are now better than

they have been for many years? Should not the Bank of England follow the lead of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and reduce interest rates further, which would be of particular help to manufacturing industry in the north?

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is right about the survey, which was carried out before the Budget. The responses on order books and the expectation of future output were higher than at any point in the history of the survey. I have little doubt that next month's figures, which will be based on a survey after the Budget, will show an even higher level of confidence. Nor is that confidence confined to the United Kingdom. My meetings abroad, with such hard-headed judges as the Swiss and the Germans, show that they also believe that permanent and beneficial changes have taken place in the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. James Lamond: What does the Minister say about the value of the pound against foreign currencies? Is he satisfied with its current rise? Does he have any view on how far it should rise before it becomes counter-productive?

Mr. Clark: Hello! I thought it was only a few months ago that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was predicting a sterling crisis because the value of the pound might fall. Perhaps he and the hon. Gentleman should have a quiet word about the appropriate angle of approach on this subject.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my hon. Friend agree that he might be being unfair to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who predicted a stirling crisis, because the excellent policies that we are now following means that the pound is bound to be strong? Does he also agree that in this excellent Budget the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not want interest rates and the pound to go too high? Would not our best hope be for the Bank of England to follow the Chancellor's excellent lead?

Mr. Clark: We have many expectations and hopes, and whether that is the best my hon. Friend may be able to judge better than me. What is certain is that matters relating to the exchange rate and the value of our currency are entirely for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. John Smith: I hope that it will not have escaped the Minister's attention that the Chancellor predicted that at the end of 1987 our deficit on the balance of trade in manufactured goods will be £8 billion. What does the hon. Gentleman say about that? Does he agree with the Chancellor, who said, from a sedentary position, that that was neither here nor there? Does the Department of Trade and Industry share that thoroughly irresponsible view of the handling of Britain's economy?

Mr. Clark: Certainly, if there is one element in our trading affairs that is less satisfactory than others, it is that relating to manufactured exports and the balance of trade for manufactured goods. We do not deny that. However, that the Opposition should make such a meal of it, singling out the one element in our trading picture where they can find a deficit, is entirely unjustified. Our trade position has to be looked at in its entirety. Our manufacturing output continues to increase. It will increase by 4 per cent. next year. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said in the Budget debate on Monday, the prospects for an improvement in that sector are increasing.

National Quality Campaign

4. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's national quality campaign.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): The campaign was launched in 1983 to raise British industry's awareness of the importance of quality for economic success, to help firms to raise the level of their quality performance and to enable firms to demonstrate their achievements. To date, over 50,000 firms have been contacted through the campaign, and there is no doubt that Britain's quality performance has improved as a result. Nevertheless, much remains to be done, and the commitment of all sections of industry and commerce to quality remains vital.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that all the advantages that we have with regard to increased competitiveness, lower interest rates, and lower inflation, and the advantages in price and the other things that go with it, could be set at naught if we do not achieve the highest quality possible in our goods and services, so that we can beat off the foreign imports on our own terms and show, as we used to in the past, that "Great Britain" means "great" in manufacture and services?

Mr. Butcher: I am sure that my hon. Friend will celebrate with me the recent figures, which show that the rate of growth of manufactured exports is slightly higher than the rate of growth of imports. I am sure we all hope that that trend will continue for the foreseeable future. My right hon. Friend is also right in linking non-price factors, such as improved quality and design, as part of the cause of that healthy trend. The national quality campaign has been the key in changing attitudes in British industry.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on an excellent quality campaign? May I reassure him that "Best made in Britain" is a good policy? Our companies are competitive. Provided we deliver our goods on time, even in Leicester, we have much to celebrate. The campaign should be supported by the Opposition, because it ensures that British goods are the best made and the best for our country's future.

Mr. Butcher: My objective is to double the number of companies that take part in the national quality campaign, by implementing quality programmes within companies. This year we shall also take a more targeted approach, concentrating on and helping major companies and their suppliers, concentrating on individual sectors and also involving regional campaigns in the approach.

Rolls-Royce plc

5. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements he has made to discuss with the trades unions of Rolls-Royce plc the consequences of privatisation.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): None. Relations with the Rolls-Royce trades unions are a matter for the company.

Mr. Nellist: Why will the Minister not meet the Rolls-Royce trade unions if, as other Ministers have stated, they believe that most workers in the company are in favour of privatisation? Why will he not meet them to explain that the Government are writing off £645 million of company debt effectively to give away Rolls-Royce, and that the management is planning to close the East Kilbride works, threatening 2,500 jobs, and generally to run down the business's dependence on aero engines, threatening thousands of jobs? Why will he not meet the unions to explain those real consequences of privatisation?

Mr. Pattie: At the press conference last week the chairman of Rolls-Royce specifically denied the East Kilbride allegations as having no foundation in fact. The answer that I gave to the hon. Gentleman still stands—relations between the trade unions and Rolls-Royce are a matter for the company. The Rolls-Royce employees are well aware that their order book is now standing at higher levels than ever before. The prospects are better than they have ever been.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be more useful if the trade unionists from Rolls-Royce met their brothers from Jaguar and had a word with them about the privatisation experience?

Mr. Pattie: That is a sensible suggestion by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Minister accept that there is a national interest here which must be protected and which led to Rolls-Royce being brought into public ownership in the first place? Will he therefore reconsider his plans and retain at least 50 per cent. of the shares in public ownership, thereby enabling the employees to have a share of their own company and enabling private capital to be brought in as well?

Mr. Pattie: No, there is no case for that. I notice that the hon. Gentleman is sitting on the 50 per cent. fence in this case. Rolls-Royce needs to be free of public sector control to be able to make its way successfully in the private sector, and we have every confidence that it will do well.

Mr. Warren: My right hon. Friend is well aware of the excellent relationships that generally exist between the trade unions and management of Rolls-Royce. Referring to the order book that he mentioned, will he assure me that, as privatisation approaches, there will be a clear declaration by the Government, heard by the employees, managers and shareholders — the public — that the contracts into which Rolls-Royce has entered, such as those for the V2500 and the Superfan engine, will be indemnified by the Government against any consequential problems?

Mr. Pattie: The V2500, as my hon. Friend well knows, is the subject of launch-aid already; and that should effectively dispose of his question on that matter.

The Superfan is the subject of a later question on the Order Paper.

Mr. Park: As the employees of any company determine its success or failure in the final analysis, has the Minister no concern for the fact that Rolls-Royce has made no attempt to explain the possible implications of privatisation?

Mr. Pattie: That is not the information that I have. The management of Rolls-Royce has assured me that it has carried out an extensive programme in all its plants of explaining exactly what the implications of the policy are, by means of fortnightly employee meetings and printed material. I shall be happy to obtain some of that material and send it to the hon. Gentleman if he wishes.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my right hon. Friend draw a distinction between the official position of the unions on this matter and the steady stream of employees from Rolls-Royce who have come to my surgery and to the surgeries of hon. Members representing neighbouring constituencies wanting to know when they will get the opportunity to buy shares in their own company?

Mr. Pattie: I am sure that my hon. Friend is giving only the latest example of what has happened in other privatisations. The work force will seize the opportunity to participate in an undertaking, which is, after all, something in which it is involved.

Mr. Crowther: Before proceeding with the privatisation of Rolls-Royce, is it not essential for the Government to introduce legislation requiring the disclosure of voting rights in shares? Such legislation should be on the lines suggested in an earlier report, which I shall not mention. If the Government do not, how can they guarantee the undertaking that they have already given — that not more than 15 per cent. of the shares in Rolls-Royce will be allowed to pass into foreign ownership — if foreign companies acquire shares through British nominees?

Mr. Pattie: We shall be taking steps in the privatisation to ensure that there is a 15 per cent. limit on any single shareholding, be it foreign or domestic.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the history of privatisations has been one of great benefit to the companies that have been privatised, to their work forces, to the economy and to the taxpayer, who gains twice: once when the shares are sold and secondly when the increased profits of privatised companies are taxed?

Is it not true that privatised companies do not have the monopoly of job losses? After all, under previous Labour Governments, nationalised industries, such as steel and coal, took more than their fair share of job losses.

Mr. Pattie: My hon. Friend is right. The list of successful privatisations in which productivity, performance and employee participation have increased to a remarkable extent bears eloquent testimony to the success of the policy.

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the Minister confirm that although Rolls-Royce has denied that it is actively considering the closure of its East Kilbride plant, it has been revealed that the document referring to that has been superseded by another, which refers to rationalisation at several places in the United Kingdom? Will he confirm that there is a widespread fear that such rationalisation will inevitably lead to redundancies?

If the Minister is to commend the suggestion by the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), that the trade unionists of Rolls-Royce should talk to their brothers at Jaguar about privatisation, should not the same trade unionists also speak to their brothers at Coventry Climax about their experience of privatisation?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the press reports which I also saw last week referring to East Kilbride. As I said in my original answer, the chairman of the company went to great lengths to deny these allegations and to say that the document was no more than a management exercise by someone at a rather junior level in the company.

Nationalised Industries

6. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much his Department will be spending on support for nationalised industries in 1986-87, as compared with 1978-79.

Mr. Channon: The total external financing requirement for the Department's nationalised industries is expected to be £177 million in 1986-87, compared with £845 million in 1978-79. This is a reduction of nearly 90 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these excellent figures are the result of determined Government policies and effective management of these industries over the years? Does he also agree that these reductions have enabled resources to be released which are much better and more effectively used in other parts of the economy?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the management of the nationalised industries and also the privatisation programme have been of immense benefit to the British people.

Mr. Eastham: If these industries are such a liability, as has just been mentioned by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), why is it that we saw such indecent scandals going on in the stock exchange when people were eagerly wanting to buy up the shares in these very industries?

Mr. Channon: The question that I have been asked is what the financing requirements are of the nationalised industries that I have in my Department. As to the question of privatisation, the whole House knows that the Government have transformed the prospects of the majority of the nationalised industries in this country. They have been placed in a situation in which they can be privatised, to the immense benefit of all concerned.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the huge sums of money that have been expended on supporting the nationalised industries over the years have held back the British economy for too long, and that the sooner the rest are brought back to profitability and the private sector the better it will be?

Mr. Channon: I am sure that we should have an increasing programme of privatisation. I agree with my hon. Friend that the sums that had to be spent in the past were a great drain on the economy, and nothing illustrates that better than the example of British Steel.

Mr. Hoyle: Will support include non-financial matters, such as not forcing Austin Rover to give commercial information, which the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor and his Department did, although this was resisted by senior management and was extremely damaging to Austin Rover, particularly to sales of the Metro? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why this was done, and will he assure the House that it will not be done again in the future?

Mr. Channon: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says, nor does this question refer to Austin Rover.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: In congratulating my right hon. Friend on these excellent figures, may I invite him to suggest to the House that the fact that other countries are following precisely the policy followed by this Government is in itself a major tribute to their success?

Mr. Channon: I think that that is right. All over the world people are following the privatisation policy. It is only the out-of-date dinosaurs on the Opposition Benches who will not do so.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister not realise that the benefits that he talks about are somewhat illusory? Does he not recognise, for example, that it is very hard to convince the consumer, in relation to British Telecom, that he or she has benefited from the privatisation? Does he not realise that £2,000 million private monopoly profit is not difficult to achieve, exercising monopoly power, but does he recognise that that means that the Government have imposed £2 million of Tory doctrine tax on consumers linked to the British Telecom system?

Mr. Channon: I do not agree with that at all. The privatisation of British Telecom has led to an upsurge in new industries and in new suppliers and to a very considerable increase in activity in the economy. The duopoly policy is also extremely successful. When one looks at the other nationalised industries, one sees that the Post Office has made very considerable strides, and I notice that the right hon. Gentleman did not mention British Steel.

Export Credit Insurance

7. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the extent to which the private sector is providing cover for export credit insurance; and if he will make it his policy to encourage this development.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are no published figures. Our impression from a variety of sources is that private sector credit insurers cover a very small, though growing, proportion of United Kingdom exports. I welcome any cost-effective developments which benefit our export trade.

Mr. Knight: Is it not a sign of the Department's inefficiency that in 1985-86 it employed 1,769 people to write just over £15 billion worth of business, whereas over the same period the private sector dealt with a greater volume of work and employed fewer than 400 people in connection therewith? When will the Department be instructed to allow United Kingdom exporters to have the choice of placing all their business in the private market? Is not the present monopoly on some work indefensible?

Mr. Clark: There are absolutely no constraints whatever on United Kingdom exporters placing their insurance wherever they wish.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I am pleased to hear the Minister's response. Will he confirm that the Government intend to maintain the present system, recognising its importance to many United Kingdom manufacturers, such as GEC, which simply could not compete in world markets without the existing Government-sponsored insurance scheme?

Mr. Clark: The Export Credits Guarantee Department has an obligation to break even, and that exercises a discipline on its judgments. However, there are, of course, certain sectors of the insurance market and certain policies which the private sector—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) referred—simply will not touch. In those sectors, if British exporters are to have a reasonable level of assurance, the ECGD is the only recourse available to them.

Mr. Cockeram: Is my hon. Friend aware that he is not quite correct to say that there are absolutely no restrictions? The ECGD operates restrictions in that it deals with the basket of an exporter's insurance needs, whereas in the private sector the exporter can choose to insure with different companies for different markets. The ECGD will not permit that.

Mr. Clark: I think that the difference between my hon. Friend and me is only one of semantics. The ECGD has to exercise the comprehensive principle, but if an exporter does not like the basket approach, to which my hon. Friend referred, he has the clear option to withdraw his custom and place what insurance he can where he can.

Mr. Robin Cook: Has the Minister seen the illuminating document, "Export Goods Not Jobs" published today by the Society of Civil and Public Servants on behalf of its members in his Department? Will he confirm that, under this Government, the Export Credits Guarantee Department has been obliged to double its premiums and that, as a result, it has lost one third of its share of the market? Will he confirm that, in the same period, the number of export support staff in his Department has fallen by two fifths, and that the number of overseas commercial officers in the Foreign Office has fallen by one seventh? Is it any wonder that exports are rising at one third the rate of imports, when the Government have been so busy pulling the rug from under the feet of British exporters?

Mr. Clark: I doubt very much whether the comparative import and export rates — to which I have already referred and which we would all like to be in better balance — have anything to do with difficulties in getting insurance cover. They certainly have very little to do with it. I am afraid that I have not seen the document to which the hon. Gentleman referred—he said that it was only published this morning — and comment on it will therefore have to wait until I can communicate with him personally.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend share my concern that the ECGD lost nearly £55 million last year on covering commercial risk, whereas the private sector manages to provide cover on commercial risk at a profit? Does that not suggest that we need to examine closely the manning levels and cost structures of ECGD, to stem the haemorrhage of taxpayers' money?

Mr. Clark: The losses to which my hon. Friend refers may relate to some extent to the internal arrangements of the ECGD, and when I went to Cardiff a few weeks ago I was very impressed by the changes that were taking place in that regard. Nevertheless, as I said earlier, we have to make available a service to British exporters to cover the sectors which, for one reason or another, the private sector flinches from entering. There are restraints, there are some sectors in which even the ECGD will not provide cover, although they are marginal. It is perfectly justifiable that some public money should be at risk in this area.

Regional Development Grants

9. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been spent on regional development grants in England so far in 1986-87; what he expects to spend in 1987-88; and if he will provide figures for the north-west.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Giles Shaw): Provisional figures for payments of regional development grants in 1986-87 to the end of February are £226·8 million in England and £91·3 million in the north-west region. The 1987-88 provision for regional development granta for England, as incorporated in the Supply Estimates, is £105 million. Future provision for expenditure on regional development grants is not allocated at the regional level. The actual distribution will depend on the pattern of demand.

Mr. Cunliffe: I acknowledge those figures — one is always grateful for small mercies under this Government —but is the Minister aware that the north-west region still has the second highest number of unemployed in Britain outside the south-east and London, and that far more money is necessary to get greater financial investment moving in that area and to create safer and more secure jobs? Is he further aware that the 1981-84 census taken by the Department of Employment reveals that 158,000 jobs were lost during that period in the north-west region? Is that not the result of the Government's complete neglect of a once great industrial region and the fact that they continue with their senseless and futile economic policies?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman will, on reflection, realise that the massive contribution of inflation to the health of the north-western economy is something for which he and other supporters of the Labour Government should take at least some responsibility. The north-west region will be a beneficiary of the improved economic climate and the £230 million of selective assistance that is being distributed, of which the north-west has £67 million, to create 17,000 jobs in recent years, is at least a start in the right direction.

Mr. Burt: Does my hon. Friend agree that large parts of the south-east are over-priced, over-congested, over-rated and thoroughly disagreeable, and that that will become far worse in the next 20 years or so? Should not northern Members of Parliament be emphasising the positive advantages of their area, which is ideally built for future business expansion, with its marvellous infrastructure, marvellously cheap places to build businesses and homes, good schools, roads, and commercial infrastructure? If business men came to our region, particularly to the metropolitan borough of Bury, regardless of regional aid grants, they would find a wonderful place for their businesses for the future.

Mr. Shaw: I think that I must wish my hon. Friend a merry Christmas.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding the reply that the Minister has just given, does he not recognise that in the north-west there are large areas of dereliction, factories which have

closed and many people out of work, and that the Government's hands-off approach has only been compounded by the giveaway Budget, which did nothing to provide additional resources for less prosperous regions? Will not the absence of a regional policy to provide new work, new hope and new prosperity, simply suck away yet more of our people and resources to the south-east?

Mr. Shaw: I am astonished at the rashness of the hon. Gentleman, coming as he does from an area of Merseyside where more public money has been spent over more years than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Has he forgotten the creation of the urban development corporation, the enormous effort made to reclaim large parts of Liverpool's city centre and the substantial number of jobs created in many urban developments within the Liverpool area to try to deal with the problem of neglect?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend accept from me, representing a north-west constituency as I do, that the Budget was warmly welcomed by industry from every sector? Will he also accept that, far from the whingeing that we have heard from the Opposition, if we had responsible councils seeking to reduce rather than increase rates to and planning departments that were prepared to be flexible in accordance with the Government's requirement, the opportunities for industry, which in my area are immense, could be repeated throughout the north-west region?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right and I am sure that he, like others who live in that part of the north-west, will welcome the creation of the urban development corporation in Trafford Park, which I am sure will have a major influence on the centre of Manchester.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Can the Minister confirm from his figures that the cuts in regional development grant in England will be £121 million in the coming year, and that, on top of cuts in Scotland of £70 million and in Wales of £40 million, that makes a total cut in regional development grant of £230 million, the biggest single percentage cut in any one year since regional policy was established, and at a time of growing and deepening regional divisions? Given the catastrophic fall in manufacturing investment value, manufacturing employment and in manufacturing output since 1979, what possible sense does £230 million worth of cuts make? How many jobs will be lost as a result?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman should know perfectly well that the national expenditure on regional assistance is now £419 million, which represents a £36 million, or 9 per cent., increase on the previous year. The hon. Gentleman should also know perfectly well that there has been a change in the pattern of assisted areas, which has now includes 70 per cent., or thereabouts, of all those in the working population. That is the benefit of redrawing the map to ensure that all assistance reaches the parts that need it most. As the hon. Gentleman wants to discuss manufacturing investment I trust that he will take heart from the fact that, although manufacturing investment in the north has indeed declined substantially, and in the north-west it declined between 1979 and 1984 by 31 per cent., there has now been a substantial growth in manufacturing investment in the north-west. In the northern region as a whole there has been a growth of 26 per cent. in one year, and in the north-west that growth has been 10 per cent. in one year.

Company Law

10. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to seek to reform company law on nominee shareholdings.

Mr. Channon: The possibility of changing company law on nominee shareholdings and other matters is already under consideration as part of the review of the operations of the takeover panel which I announced in the House on 28 January.

Mr. Sedgemore: Why has the Secretary of State embarked on a programme of determined inertia and felicitous procrastination as regards the breaking up of offshore syndicates run by eminent and distinguished merchant bankers, accountants and solicitors who deal in nominee shareholdings? Can the Secretary of State tell us what progress has been made in the discussions between his Department and the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, which act as havens for fraudsters in this sphere?

Mr. Channon: We have had discussions with a number of regulatory authorities, and these are proceeding extremely satisfactorily. As for determined inertia, that is hardly a fair accusation when I have already told the House that I hope to make an aanouncement about the review of the operations of the takeover panel next month.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: Would it not be a simple matter immediately to implement the recommendations of the stock exchange, which are that nominee shareholdings should be unable to exercise voting rights or to nominate proxies?

Mr. Channon: Yes, that is certainly one of the matters presently under consideration.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not possible that Marketing and Acquisition Consultants, a firm in Jersey, is a receptacle for large amounts of money belonging to Guinness, which is being fed into the island illegally? Why do the Government not find out who owns that company? Why do they not make extraordinary efforts, as against using the mechanisms that are currently available to them? The Government can find out who is behind that company if they wish to know. It is in the public interest to find out. Why do the Government not make a greater effort?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that a number of investigations are taking place. I really do not believe that it is proper for me to go further than that in the House at this time.

Research and Development

11. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the change in real terms in Government support for civil research and development since May 1979.

Mr. Pattie: My Department's support for civil research and development in this financial year is forecast to be £372 million. This is some 60 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979-80.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Minister accept that the expenditure on civil research and development in this country lags far behind that of our major competitors in other parts of the world? Will the Minister tell the House why the Government have not done more to increase that

expenditure and to encourage companies to increase their research and development expenditure? Does the Minister not hang his head in shame at the way in which he and his colleagues have, in the past 24 hours, torpedoed the European Commission's proposals for increasing expenditure on research and development?

Mr. Pattie: If I can take the last point first, having just returned from the particular research council, we have not torpedoed anything. What we are insisting upon is that, before we agree an expenditure of more than £5 billion, the Commission should have a sensible series of programmes with which it can convince us about what it is trying to achieve. We must also know whether the proper methods of evaluation have been put in place and whether it is possible to turn off some of those programmes if they are not achieving their targets.

As regards the hon. Gentleman's other points, he will be interested to know, from a press release from my Department on 26 February 1987, that civil expenditure on research and development in 1985 was £4·8 billion at current prices. That represents an increase of 16 per cent. on the £4·2 billion figure in 1983—two years before.

Mr. Richard Page: Despite the increase in 1979, does my right hon. Friend agree that scientists become somewhat blinkered about the value of projects? Is it not necessary that projects are correctly evaluated for their commercial potential? Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the evaluation process that is carried out by the Government is sufficient, bearing in mind the vast sums of taxpayers' money involved?

Mr. Pattie: Quite frankly, I do not think that one can ever be satisfied. The evaluation and monitoring procedures have improved a great deal in recent years. My hon. Friend is right. I do not see why, in the public sector, one should accept lower standards than one would in private business or, indeed, in one's personal life. If public money is involved, lower standards of monitoring and evaluation seem to obtain.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister accept that the money that is made available for civil research and development is not fairly distributed throughout the regions of the country, because there is a tendency to go where the head offices of industries are located—in the south-east? Will he take some positive steps to ensure that regions such as the north-west get a fairer distribution of this important work?

Mr. Pattie: It is not actually the head offices that do research, as the hon. Gentleman knows. It is where the laboratories are situated. I visited several excellent research establishments in the hon. Gentleman's part of the country, which shows that some good research is going on in the north-west as well.

Mr. Latham: Although I welome the increase of 60 per cent. in real terms that my right hon. Friend announced, does he agree that a great deal more could be done by private industry, particularly when its profitability is sharply increasing?

Mr. Pattie: I agree with my hon. Friend. The House will be interested to know that, although British industry expenditure on research and development has gone up 20 per cent. in the past 20 years, during the same period industry expenditure in Germany and France has doubled, and in Japan it has trebled.

Mr. Williams: What does the Minister intend to do about the figures that he has just given? Is he not worried that we have an escalating brain drain of our top scientists? What does he intend to do about that? Does he realise that that is an absolutely essential area for Government activity? What proposals does he have to offer?

Mr. Pattie: The right hon. Gentleman may have forgotten the Link programme that was announced in November, which is a £420 million programme designed specifically to attack the exploitation problem that we have in this country of the extra time that it takes to develop an innovation or an idea into a marketable product. It is a large programme, working with the academic sector, Government and industry, and is designed to bring everyone together and to pull new products through.

Purchasing Initiatives

13. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the implementation of his Department's public purchasing initiatives.

Mr. Butcher: The public sector spends about £40 billion each year on assets, goods and services. My Department is enhancing its programme to promote, with public bodies and their suppliers, the advantages of positive purchasing with the aim of achieving value for money in this spending and, at the same time, improved competitiveness in firms.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that a more efficient expenditure of that enormous sum of money could have a dramatic impact upon our economy? Will he do all that he can to achieve, say, at least a 5 per cent. improvement in the efficiency of the spending of that cash this year? Will he do the same in future years, if he can?

Mr. Butcher: There are two objectives of my Department's public purchasing initiative. The first is to support the central unit on purchasing on value for money. Secondly, through the application of the principle of positive purchasing, we seek to ensure that, when the money is spent, a number of British companies become more competitive as a result of enlightened purchasing procedures and, therefore, supply more products into these contracts.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Does the Minister accept the fact that given the size of the public sector and its purchases there is a real opportunity to use it to encourage regional industry, such as in the northern region and the north-west of Scotland, and so on? There should be a specific and clear criterion. The Minister did not mention that, but said that he would take this regional distribution of purchasing into account to support the industries.

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his observation. He is anticipating a certain part of our thinking on the public purchasing initiative. We have now agreed guidelines for the PPI principles, and we shall be pleased to present them either on a sectoral basis or on a regional basis. However, I accept the hon. Gentleman's point.

Japan

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the current balance of trade with Japan.

Mr. Alan Clark: From the provisional figures for the 12 months ended December 1986, United Kingdom trade with Japan showed a balance of trade deficit of £3·7 billion.

Mr. Hirst: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply, although it brings me no comfort. What evidence is there that the various undertakings that are contained in the Japanese action programme to facilitate the access of British imports to Japanese markets have been honoured by the Japanese?

Mr. Clark: None.

Mr. MacKenzie: Does the Minister accept that in the constituencies of various hon. Members there are electrical appliance industry and other interests which are very concerned that the Japanese people and their Government, while making encouraging noises about their desire to import, nevertheless impose such stringent and sometimes ludicrous conditions regarding the safety of various appliances that they seldom, if ever, get into Japan? If we in this country were to impose such stringent conditions as theirs, there would hardly be a Japanese product that could enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Clark: The right hon. Gentleman is entirely right. He cites one example of, I am sorry to say, a large number of British goods that would otherwise be competitive but that are excluded by Government or quasi-governmental devices.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to condemn the Japanese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications action in blocking Cable and Wireless investment and United States investment, as allowed by Japanese law? Will he also take this opportunity to say what he hopes Her Majesty's Government can do, in the face of this acid test, to persuade Japan to allow British investment in that country?

Mr. Clark: This is certainly an exemplary situation, which completely encapsulates the Japanese attitude and the difficulty of breaking into a most important sector. The British Government have been active. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—*[Interruption.]* I do not understand why the Opposition are reacting in this way. This is practically the most serious single topic with which we are dealing. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is the hon. Gentleman going to do about it?"] I am telling hon. Members what we have done. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote to Mr. Karasawa on 13 February. He received no reply. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote to Mr. Nakasone on 4 March and has had no reply. I know that a number of senior members of the American Administration have also written about it. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We all want to hear the answer.

Mr. Clark: I assume that the Opposition's attitude is good-natured, but I detect in it a strong undertone of indignation, which I know is shared on this side of the House. In the course of time this level of indignation, which is widely held in this country, in the Community and in the United States, will finally find expression—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members know very well that in GATT, in the Treaty of Rome and in all our treaty obligations there are very powerful restraints on retaliatory action, but the House is demonstrating this afternoon a level of indignation that ultimately will make such action inevitable.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that if I were standing in his shoes at the Dispatch Box answering questions in that way I would be thoroughly ashamed of myself? I thought that the Government were asking people to buy British. How can they when they look in the warehouses, the retail outlets and the shops and all the goods are made in Japan? Why does the Minister not take the short walk to No. 10 and tell the Prime Minister that he has failed in his duty and resign?

Mr. Clarke: I notice that neither the hon. Gentleman nor his hon. Friends actually come out and recommend import controls—or do they?

Sir Bernard Braine: May I say how refreshing I find the candour of my hon. Friend the Minister? May I also say that expressions from the Opposition Benches about this unsatisfactory situation are not just widely, but are wholly, shared by Conservative Members? The Japanese Government must be given to understand that their behaviour in this regard militates against a healthy and natural expansion of the world economy. They are not serving their own interests in the long run and we hope that the day will come quickly when Her Majesty's Government, in company with our partners in the Community, will be able to get some effective action against these pirates.

Mr. Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. For some reason, Opposition Members refuse to acknowledge that there is a comprehensive system of international trade treaties which regulate world trade. These treaties have been built up over a long period to restrain and deter trade wars. Where one country deliberately flouts, ignores or circumvents that system, it has only itself to blame for the consequences. To put those consequences in order—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Give the Minister a chance.

Mr. Clark: I do not object to what Opposition Members are doing; I welcome it. This indignation, which has not been shown in the House before, is timely and is a great help. But hon. Members and the House must realise that to take action involves a consensus of agreement with our trading partners. It involves getting the United States and the Community on side, and it may ultimately involve action outside GATT.

Mr. Hickmet: Miti and Japan are planning world domination through trade. Their respect for international conventions, as the Minister will know, as a historian, is hardly honourable. There are the examples of non-tariff trade barriers, the dumping of credit and the capturing of international markets. We have Nomura moving into the City of London and the financial institutions from Japan are moving to take over the City. If my hon. Friend wants a weapon, he has it there. Tell the Japanese to take their financial operations out of the City, remove their trading markets and let them go home.

Mr. Clark: My hon. Friend is quite right. Indeed, the principle of reciprocation is embodied in the Financial Services Act. This is the one sector where we have the possibility of immediate retaliation where appropriate. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is going to Japan in a few weeks' time and he will make that perfectly clear.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Minister understand that, having invited the House to be indignant, he has now heard its indignation expressed clearly and forcefully? Does he appreciate that, for a Government who have been in office for eight years, it is not good enough for them to come to the Dispatch Box and wring their hands about the difficulties in dealing with the Japanese? Let me tell him what he might consider doing—do to the Japanese what they do to us.

Mr. Clark: I wish that I could. As the right hon. Gentleman well knows, we do not have at our disposal the same kind of administrative machine as the Japanese, and that at present we are constrained by a whole range of international treaties, to deviate from which would require the consent and approval of our partners.

Superfan

15. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce his decision on launch-aid for Superfan.

Mr. Pattie: Rolls-Royce has not yet submitted a full application for launch-aid. Any application will be considered in the usual way.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that perhaps the best way in which he could advance any future application for launch aid for Superfan would be an early and favourable decision on British participation in the A340 Airbus, particularly in the time scale within which he indicated to me earlier this year it would be taken, that is by the end of March?

Mr. Pattie: I do not expect Rolls-Royce to put in its launch-aid application quite as soon as my hon. Friend has said. Perhaps it will do so in the next two to three months. My hon. Friend and the House will be pleased to know that Rolls-Royce today announced that it has signed a business agreement with Boeing to install the 211 engine —the 524D4D in the 767 family of Boeing aeroplanes. That is very good news.

Mr. Millan: Could the Minister be a little more precise about the business of the launch-aid for the Superfan, because it is very much bound up with the success of the A340? It would help the House and those of us who are interested in the A340 Rolls-Royce engine to know exactly when all this will be resolved.

Mr. Pattie: As I said in my original answer, we have not yet received a launch-aid application from Rolls-Royce for the Superfan. The situation about the Superfan in relation to the A340 is that the arrival of the Superfan engine will certainly improve the selling and marketing prospects of the A340. It is not essential but it makes the aeroplane still better. I understand that the International Aeroengines consortium, of which Rolls-Royce is a member, will take a decision fairly soon about whether to proceed with the Superfan. All these decisions have to be taken in sequence.

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement

3.33 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for old age pensions of a sufficient level to eliminate poverty in retirement; and to ensure that these are regularly increased in line with the average earnings of those in work.

The existing levels of old-age pension of £38.70 for a single person and £61.90 for a couple are a disgrace in a civilised society. Even with the increase in pensions proposed in April, they will still only be £39.50 for a single person and £63.25 for a couple. Those rates compare extremely unfavourably with any western European rates. The French pay £78 a week and Luxembourg pays £69 a week.

I propose this Bill to draw attention to the miserable life of many elderly people and ask the House to understand the increased costs faced by pensioners compared with the rest of the population. For example, every winter this House debates the problems of fuel poverty among elderly people. We wring our hands for a couple of months while the cold weather is here and then forget all about the pensioners. We fail to realise that, because of the low level of the pension and the need for pensioners to keep their homes warmer in winter than the homes of the rest of the population, they spend on average 10 per cent. of their income on heating, compared with rather less than 6 per cent. spent by the rest of the population.

The same applies when purchasing goods, because younger, wealthier people are able to buy in greater bulk than pensioners. Any comparison of the normal retail prices index with the retail prices index for pensioners would show that the so-called drop in the consumer prices index that the Government keep telling us about is irrelevant when talking about small consumers such as old-age pensioners. Pensions should at least have some regard to the retail prices index as it affects pensioners.

My Bill also seeks to draw attention to the problems of bad health that elderly people suffer. We have discussed, particularly during the cold weather spell, the serious problem of deaths from hypothermia. It is not a disease in the sense of cancer, pneumonia, bronchitis or anything like that: it is a disease that is solely the fault of badly designed and badly built houses, too low an old-age pension and too many pensioners living in too much cold throughout the miseries of winter.

There were 166 recorded deaths from hypothermia in the first quarter of 1983 in England and Wales. In 1984, there were 205; in 1985, 363; and in 1986, 355. In the case of Scotland, the figure is proportionately higher, from 116 in the first quarter of 1983 rising to 135 in the first quarter of 1986. That does not include the figure of deaths from hypothermia through the miseries of last winter, when even the increases in heating allowances that the Government promised have been eaten up by standing charges and high fuel bills.

We have observed, when looking at the condition of pensioners, that they often wait a long time for hospital treatment. Because of the lack of sufficient old people's accommodation provided by local government, geriatric patients often spill over to general wards, thus exacerbating the problem of hospital waiting lists. While the Government will tell us that they have a target figure for many services that should be provided for the elderly, in the case of the Health Service or in local government, very infrequently are these targets met.

I have before me an excellent report produced by my union, the National Union of Public Employees, entitled, "Time for Justice". It is a report on care for the elderly and it is produced by people who work day in day out caring for the elderly, and who have analysed the problems of Health Service provision and local government provision. It gives as an example the provision of home helps per thousand of population aged over 65. Of the 108 local authorities, only 18 are above the target figure recommended by the Government. Worst is the council of the Isle of Wight, which provides only 2·67 home helps per thousand of population. The highest, other than the City of London, which is an exception in itself, is Newcastle, with a provision of 16. Most authorities are unable to meet the target, and it is not always the fault of the local autorities either, because central Government rate capping and expenditure policies mean that these services have often been badly cut.

In every area, the provision of services for the elderly is inadequate and insufficient. Demand, as reported in the recent edition of "Social Trends", has increased considerably, for example in the number of people treated by home nurses and chiropody services. In no way does the increase in the services meet the increased needs of the elderly population. My Bill seeks to draw attention to some of these problems.

The first thing we propose is that the pension level should be dramatically increased. In 1980, the Government broke the relationship of the old-age pension to earnings, and that means that pensioners are worse off. A single pensioner is worse off by £7·20 and a married couple by £11·40 a week, compared with when the Government came into office eight years ago. My Bill proposes that in future the level of pensions should be linked, as a minimum, to that of the average industrial earnings. That was the proposal of the National Pensioners Convention which lobbied the House on 5 March. I wonder how many hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, met people who came on that lobby and said, "What a good idea. How well we understand you and we go along with your proposal." At the same time, they support the Government that have done nothing about that but have increased and exacerbated poverty among the elderly.

If the Bill passes into law, as I hope it will, under the National Pensioners Convention demand, the married couple pension would increase to £86·57 and the single pension to £57 a week. That is still comparable only to the level provided by other western European countries, so is not an awful lot to look at. The Government have recently altered the tax thresholds. If the single person's pension was merely increased to the level of the single person's tax allowance, the single person would be better off by £371 per year. That is an indication of the poverty in which many elderly people live.

The other simple but important proposals in the Bill are that each local authority should be asked to report once a year the condition of the elderly people within its area, the effectiveness of the provisions of its services and how near it is to meeting Government targets. The report should include the provision of home helps, occupational therapists, chiropody services where appropriate for local

government, and, above all, the provision of housing accommodation and what research has been done into the design of housing for the elderly.

The Bill also requires local health authorities to do exactly the same. As in the case of local government, health authorities have guidelines on the provision of geriatric beds but very seldom are those guidelines adhered to or the targets met. Again, it is not always the fault of the health authority. If one lives in an area such as mine, where the health authority is having, in real terms, a cut of 15 per cent. in expenditure this decade, it is hardly surprising that the provision of health care for the elderly suffers as a result.

The final proposal is that, instead of wringing their hands and saying that the problem of the elderly is somebody else's problem, the Government should appoint one Minister responsible for co-ordinating all aspects of policy in respect of the care of the elderly, including transport, housing and health. That Minister should present an annual report to the House which would show the deprivation and poverty in which many people in this country are forced to live.

When the Government introduced their so-called social security reforms last year, they announced that in future they would have to encourage private pension arrangements because this country could no longer afford a high level of basic old age pension. It is a scandal that they should say that, and it is nonsense.

What I am arguing in the Bill, and what other hon. Members who support the Bill are arguing, is that the country must afford to look after its elderly in a decent manner. It must afford to ensure that they are properly cared for throughout their retirement and that proper services are provided. It is no good merely encouraging City spivs to make a killing out of private pension plans, while in real terms reducing the level of the old age pension. This Bill provides an opportunity to give some decency in retirement to the elderly people of Britain who are forgotten for most of the year.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Don Dixon, Ms. Jo Richardson, Mr. Harry Cohen, Miss Joan Maynard, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Bill Michie, Mr. Chris Smith and Mr. Tony Benn.

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn accordingly presented a Bill to provide for old age pensions of a sufficient level to eliminate poverty in retirement; and to ensure that these are regularly increased in line with the average earnings of those in work. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 1 May and to be printed. [Bill 125.]

Orders of the Day

Rate Support Grant (England)

3.43 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 253), which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

Perhaps it will be for the convenience of the House if we also consider the other two motions relating to English reports:

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3) 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 259), which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 258), which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: If the House agrees to debate all three reports, so be it.

Mr. Ridley: The House is aware that I was unable to lay those reports until the Local Government Finance Act 1987 had received the Royal Assent. In my statement of 13 January I announced my intentions for the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement. Those remain largely unchanged, apart from the modifications required as a result of the High Court judgment in the Greenwich case, which I announced to the House on 5 March, and which in the main affects authorities in London. I do not therefore propose to describe that report in detail. Despite all the difficulties that have arisen this year, I am glad that we have been able to lay the report, particularly the main report, before the new financial year starts, so that grant can be paid. I am extremely grateful to Opposition Members for their help and support in achieving this great success.

I must remind the House that we have provided a generous settlement for local authorities. The aggregate Exchequer grant of £12,842 million is an increase of over £1 billion—9 per cent. more than in the settlement for 1986-87. Provision for local authority current expenditure at £25,251 million is 13 per cent. more than last year. Those figures exclude the additional provision of £460 million, and the grant of £183 million which we have said will be made available for the teachers' pay settlement for 1987-88.

The settlement allows for non-rate-capped authorities to increase their current expenditure by 5·25 per cent. When teachers' pay is taken into account, that will allow education authorities to increase expenditure by 7·75 per cent. Those increases are more than the rate of inflation that we expect next year, which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast in the financial statement and Budget report last week to be 4·5 per cent. on the GDP deflator. Therefore, there is no reason why prudent and responsible authorities could not have chosen to set reasonable budgets and rates.

This year, we are in a position to know how much local authorities have, in practice, chosen to spend, and the consequent effect on their rates. In most years we do not know that when we debate the settlement, but most of

[Mr. Ridley]

them have now declared their budgets and rates. That makes this debate a little more interesting than normal, because we can read the book, instead of having to gaze into the crystal ball.

If authorities had budgeted to spend at the settlement assumption, plus the allowance for teachers' pay, the average increase in rates would have been about 2·9 per cent. In practice, we find that, in aggregate, authorities are budgeting for an increase in total expenditure of around 2 per cent. more than has been provided for. That higher spending means that rates will increase by around 6 per cent. on average. Although 6 per cent. is much lower than last year, it is still too high and higher than is necessary.

The figures—I stress that they are averages—disguise the wide variations between individual authorities. Many authorities have clearly sought to restrain expenditure and limit rate rises. Others have chosen to pursue profligate spending policies at the expense of the ratepayers.

Let me give the precept increase figures for the shire counties, for which we now have all the reports. In Conservative-controlled counties, precepts will increase, on average, by 6·5 per cent. In Labour-controlled counties, they will increase by an average of 8·7 per cent. In Lib-Lab pact counties, they will rise by 9·1 per cent., and in the one Liberal-controlled county—the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) is not in his place, but that is the one jewel in the Liberal crown—that figure is 10 per cent. It seems that one pays a 2 per cent. premium for living in a Socialist county, and an extra 0·5 per cent. on top of that for the price of alliance support.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his mathematics lesson. If what he has said is right, why does the Conservative leader of the Dorset county council, Councillor David Fox, when relating the Secretary of State's figures to his own county, say that the Government are not living in the real world? If that is what a Conservative county council leader says, the figures are nonsense.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman is not living in the real world, and there is a message in this for the electorate. We all know that Tory councils keep rates down and that Labour councils are high spenders and do not care about ratepayers. The new factor is that Lib-Lab-controlled, hung councils are equally high spenders. It must be depressing for those who thought that voting alliance was an anti-Labour vote to see alliance councillors supporting the same old Socialist policies of high spending and giving the Labour tail a chance to wag the Liberal dog.

In the metropolitan areas, the average increase in the local rate of non-rate-capped Labour authorities is about 11 per cent. Compare that with Solihull—the only Tory-controlled metropolitan council—which has managed to reduce its rate by 1 per cent. *[Laughter.]* That is the difference. If all the others were controlled by the Tories, they might have done equally well.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, especially since he has just given the "average" of the single Tory authority in the metropolitan districts under Conservative control. Is not the real message of what he has said that overwhelmingly in the metropolitan districts in England the Tories have been kicked from office because people do not like their policies?

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make a point of the fact that there is only one Conservative-controlled metropolitan council, let me, too, point out that there is only one Liberal county council. The hon. Gentleman was happy to accept my figure of a 10 per cent. rise in the rate of the Isle of Wight council as being the highest of all the party averages. Similarly, I am happy to accept that the sample is small for the metropolitan counties.

But it is when we look at London that we see the biggest differences in rate increases. In inner London, as a result of our successful rate-limiting policies, rates bills will be lower than last year for many ratepayers. Also, prudent authorities have budgeted sensibly, so have no rate increases — for example Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea. However, the ratepayers of Hammersmith and Fulham are not so fortunate because their council has increased its local rate by a staggering 127 per cent. Happily, our precept limits, particularly on the Inner London education authority, mean that rate bills in the borough will increase by rather less—by 50 per cent., which is still too high. Ratepayers in Wandsworth will still enjoy the lowest rate bills in London. Wandsworth's general rate will rise by 2 per cent. and it has just announced a record capital programme.

In outer London, Ealing has increased its local rate by 72 per cent. and Waltham Forest has increased the local rate by 67 per cent. Hon. Members are already aware of some of the ridiculous ways in which Ealing proposes to spend all that money. Council workers have celebrated the council's largesse by going on strike. One local resident, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition, is reported to be happy to pay more in rates. But ratepayers in Ealing have a double bonus: they will apparently have to pay an extra 72 per cent. more for no services because the service workers are all on strike.

Ratepayers in the alliance-Labour controlled borough of Kingston fare no better than their counterparts in the counties. In Kingston, the alliance councillors wanted to put up the domestic rates by 20·6 per cent. and Tory councillors by 5·9 per cent. The four Labour councillors got the alliance to compromise at their figure of 16 per cent. So much for the middle way.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that services in Ealing are at a complete standstill, that people cannot be admitted to hospital for essential operations because nobody can be discharged as there are no home services and that people in sheltered accommodation are having horrendous difficulties in getting hold of their milk, laundry and mail? Those are merely a few of the terrible effects of the horrendous rate increase and the strike.

In addition, 30 or 40 schools, including special schools, are closed and children are being sent home. That is what Socialism is about in practice. Will my right hon. Friend compare that with the 4 per cent. rate reduction last year in Ealing under the Conservatives?

Mr. Ridley: The tragedy is that, until this year, Ealing managed to hold its real spending almost level for the eight years from 1979. For all that time, it managed to provide better services at the same real cost to its ratepayers. All that achievement has been thrown away in one year. I have every sympathy for my hon. Friend's ratepayers.

Next year there will be no grant recycling. The House has passed legislation to bring that to an end. Opposition Members have tried in the past to scare us with stories about the consequences. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), for example, told the House on 4 February:

"On one low estimate, the loss will be £¾ billion. On a higher estimate it will mean a loss . . . of £1,000 million." —[*Official Report*, 4 February 1987; Vol. 109, c. 1315.]

That would be lost through the abolition of recycling.

The local authorities maintained that at least £400 million would be lost. I can now tell the House and Opposition Members that on the basis of the current information on spending plans available to my Department—a high proportion of all returns are now in—the grant underclaim will be around £200 million, after taking account of the changes for teachers' pay. It need not even be that high. Local authorities have only themselves to blame if they forgo grant.

Authorities have plenty of scope for improving their efficiency and reaping the benefits in reduced costs. The benefits to be gained by putting services out to competitive tendering have been well established. The Audit Commission has done much valuable work on the scope for savings from improved efficiency. In particular, the commission's report on eight deprived London boroughs pointed out that there were specific opportunities in those boroughs for improvements of about £100 million a year —£100 million currently wasted on gross inefficiency. Its recent report into competitiveness and contracting out generally suggested that nationally some £500 million could be saved.

I am glad to see that at last I have the support of the Labour party and that of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in demanding more efficiency from local government. I have a copy of the new Labour party publication entitled "Best Practice News" and I am sure that Opposition Members will be very familiar with that. Its aims are

"To show how Labour control not only means better levels of service but also better management of services".

and to

"Give value for people as well as value for money."

It is that aim for value for money that I also welcome from the Opposition.

However, when we look inside that document, it is not quite so rosy. The report of the Leeds conference contained in the document on improving services gives the game away a little:

"Planning improvements to services and opposing compulsory competitive tendering legislation go hand in hand."

I am not sure that they do go hand in hand in my book.

The deputy general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees also gave the game away when he said:

"There will be times when the interests of the consumer won't match exactly what suits the work force."

There is no mention of value for money when we get down to the fine print.

The truth is:

"The services which local councils provide make all the difference to the quality of life for working people . . . But Labour councils are generally bad at providing them. The trouble is that municipal Socialists—most Socialists really —aren't that interested in how to run things. Lately, too, Labour councils have given too much power to the local trade unions and they have been able to stop or slow down important changes . . . the result is a welfare state at a local level which is generally wasteful and oppressive to work for and unresponsive, unaccountable and unpopular".

Would any Opposition Member care to disagree with that?

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Secretary of State understand that report after report from every independent voice of which one can think, ranging from the Church to health authorities reporting today, show enormous inequalities of wealth and advantage between the haves and the have-nots? Will he for once show some awareness of those problems and act like a Secretary of State responsible for the inequalities that face our people and not give a speech reminiscent of a third-rate local leader of the Conservative party, blind with prejudice and ignorance?

Mr. Ridley: The last six sentences which I quoted were not from a third-rate, blinded-with-prejudice leader of a Conservative council. They were a direct quotation from an article by a certain Mr. Hoggett from Bristol university in this month's edition of the official Labour party publication *New Socialist*. That is what the hon. Gentleman's friends think about Socialism in municipalities in action. I would never dare use words like that. *[Interruption.]* Now that my cover is blown, we shall not get the hon. Gentleman on his feet so quickly again.

Since pay accounts for 70 per cent. of local authority costs, they should seek to reduce the impact of pay increases by seeking savings. In particular, local authorities should look to their manpower requirements. The Civil Service has reduced its total manpower by 18 per cent. since 1979. Compare this with a 3·25 per cent. reduction in local authority manpower. I was most concerned to learn that figures issued by the Joint Manpower Watch yesterday show that, for the sixth successive quarter, local authority manpower is increasing, despite the savings from abolition.

I stress again that we have provided a generous settlement for authorities which should seek to take full advantage of it. One would hardly believe, with all the complaints that we hear, including those by the hon. Member for Copeland, about the need for Labour authorities to spend more, that local authorities as a whole are already spending 13 per cent. more this year in real terms than they were in 1978-79 and have budgeted to spend even more next year. One wonders how local government survived in the austere days of the Labour Government.

I remind the House of the two supplementary reports for which I am also seeking approval. The third supplementary report for 1985-86 will provide a further £385 million grant previously withheld, as authorities have brought their spending closer to target. It will also adjust grant to take account of provisional outturn expenditure and certain changes in education pool contributions.

I have been obliged to make certain changes to the supplementary report for 1986-87 as a result of the judgment in the Greenwich court case, as I explained on 5 March. That report will, however, still distribute the block grant underclaim of some £618 million consequent on estimates of total expenditure received from authorities on or before 19 December. My predecessor guaranteed that £500 million of grant would be recycled in the first supplementary report for 1986-87. This report will honour that guarantee.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Will my right hon. Friend please help those of us in Essex who have noticed

[Dr. Michael Clark]

that Essex and Hampshire have almost identical grant-related expenditure and almost identical populations but that Essex has a rateable value only 10 per cent. more than Hampshire, yet Hampshire has a 40 per cent. greater grant for 1987-88? There seem to be some inconsistencies between the two counties.

Mr. Ridley: It is very difficult to give specific answers to problems raised in interventions. Since 1979, Essex has increased its real terms spending by 8·5 per cent. whereas Hampshire has increased it by only 1·1 per cent. That might well be the territory in which my hon. Friend's question lies, but I should like to supplement it by giving him a more detailed response when I have had time to look more carefully at the figures.

The House will wish to know that, when I laid the reports on 20 March, the Department notified the 20 high-spending authorities of their rate limit, which flows from the formula in the Local Government Finance Act 1987. The responsible Departments have also notified the 20 joint authorities automatically selected for precept limitation of their precept limits produced by the formulae in the Bill. I ask the House to approve these three reports.

4.5 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): We have just heard a speech of the most sickening irrelevance to the problems of our people and the country, a speech devoid of any scintilla of understanding of the nature of the problems that people face or of the urgent need to change direction to bring new policy initiatives to our inner cities, to education, to housing and to the creation of jobs. It was at least mercifully brief by the right hon. Gentleman's standards. It was difficult to discern from what he was saying that we are debating very important issues which contain many decisions of considerable social and economic importance, and the very language of the report, the speech and the title of the debate do not convey any sense of the wide-ranging implications for essential local services, education, housing, social services and environmental health of what the Secretary of State had to say and what the Government are doing. The technical jargon often employed seems calculated to obscure those real issues, perhaps for the satisfaction of the Government, who take every opportunity to disguise the real intentions of Conservative policies.

The debate is about why the Conservative Government refuse properly to finance services which are essential to the social and economic well being of people, young and old, employed and unemployed alike. The debate is about the Conservative Government's refusal to accept the validity of local democracy.

Mr. Ridley: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is persisting with his prepared text. Did he not hear me say that since 1979 the total spending of local authorities has gone up by 13 per cent. in real terms? How can he claim that authorities are deprived now, whereas presumably they were not deprived when he left office in 1978-79, although they are spending 13 per cent. more in real terms? I cannot understand the logic of that.

Dr. Cunningham: We are well aware that the Secretary of State does not understand the issues, nor does he seem to care about them. He does not need to tell us what we know only too well. The Government have done everything to stop local authorities from investing in services. That is what the Rates Act 1984 is all about. That is what the total of £18 billion-worth of accumulated cuts in rate support grant has been all about. That is what the right hon. Gentleman was referring to in his speech when he accused authorities that spend more than he deems necessary of being "profligate". All those Government attempts have been to reduce local government's facility to support decent levels of service and provision. After all, that has been the hallmark of eight years of this Government. Is the right hon. Gentleman suddenly denying that?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that argument. It is true that the percentage of rate support grant has been cut and that authoriries have been involved in creative accounting, but the point that I am trying to get home to him is that the net result of everything that has happened in the eight years is that local authorities are spending 13 per cent. more. The point that he cannot substantiate is that they are short of resources. If they are short of resources now, how short of resources were they in 1978?

Dr. Cunningham: We are beginning to see the Jekyll and Hyde nature of the right hon. Gentleman's political character. Now he is apparently, on behalf of the Government taking credit for the increase in expenditure which for eight years they have been denouncing. He had better make up his mind on which side of the argument he really is. We know which side we are on. We are in favour of more investment in people, and in the services that are so essential to their economic and social well-being.

The Secretary of State mentioned Ealing. I am sorry that his hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has disappeared. Does the right hon. Gentleman support the expenditure decisions of the now Labour-controlled Ealing council, which he was denigrating a few moments ago—the reintroduction of places for rising-fives in primary schools, the deals to acquire 600 new homes in the face of the housing crisis and the employment of extra home helps and extra staff to deal with the under-fives? The council is taking on much-needed local housing repair teams and recruiting 150 extra teachers. Does the right hon. Gentleman support those decisions? Does he support the extra expenditure about which he has been boasting in that context? What is the answer? It is that the right hon. Gentleman has not the guts to say that he does not support it. That is the reality of the Government's pathetic position.

The proximity of this debate to the Budget reminds us of the Government's continuing policy of switching the burdens of such services from the taxpayer to the ratepayer — a policy pursued relentlessly for eight years and accompanied all the time by the crocodile tears of Tory Members about the inevitable rates increases that have resulted. Today's debate is about the Government's determination to enforce more and more central control —more powers for Ministers who abuse them all too frequently, using them to prevent and to crush sensible and sensitive public investment in people, their families and community services wherever they can.

Yesterday's announcement about the widening health gap in our country should shame Conservative Members, especially those Ministers who have deliberately and

massively reduced investment in housing and employment. It should especially shame those Ministers who have planned and organised a systematic withdrawal of cash from the inner cities, where some of the worst problems in Europe persist. The reality is that the cuts in rate support grant are more than 10 times the additional support under special measures given to the inner-city authorities that are most in need. That is the damage that the Government have done to the most deprived communities in our country.

Yesterday's attempt to suppress the report of the Health Education Council is typical of this shameless Government, who also tried to suppress the earlier report of Sir Douglas Black. The latest attempt to stifle debate contrasts embarrassingly with the weekend leaks of the Prime Minister's alleged concern for the plight of neglected inner-city areas, which is so much a legacy of eight years of Thatcherism. Those very conditions of bad housing, poor environment, inadequate social services and health care, poverty and unemployment, which has trebled under this Government, led to the widening health gap that is so damaging to individuals, families and the national well-being. It is the Government's failure adequately and responsibly to deal with those problems that we are debating today.

Even worse, those Conservative failures result from the deliberate intention of policy. They are no accident. In addition, we have seen how the volume of complicated, contradictory and inconsistent local government law—the force-feeding of the Tory right with statute after statute—has reduced any attempt at sensible planning of local government finance to a shambles. We are told that the Secretary of State has been reduced to impotent rage by the stupidities of the system which his colleagues have created and which he has inherited and supported consistently over the past eight years.

The journal *Public Finance and Accountancy* states:

"Local government is suffering from a surfeit of new legislation. Each successive piece of legislation seems to increase rather than reduce uncertainty".

But still the Government plough on into the mire. Today, Parliament is asked to accept a report first announced by the right hon. Gentleman in 1986, when he published a consultation paper and wrote to all the Conservative councillors in the country recommending his proposals.

The Secretary of State published his first set of detailed proposals on block grant distribution on 3 October 1986. A further set of detailed proposals were published on 3 December, and another set on 13 January 1987. Following the decision on the Greenwich borough case, yet another set was published on 5 March. We understand that if the Secretary of State is successful in his appeal against the Greenwich decision a further set of proposals may be put forward for the coming financial year.

What, we wonder, is the purpose of the right hon. Gentleman's appeal? What is he hoping to achieve by trying to obtain a decision that will yet again cause confusion and uncertainty in local government finance, when budgets will already be fixed and rates will already have been set?

The changes in provisional block grant entitlements for some authorities alter substantially from one consultation paper to another. As the hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) and his colleagues in Bromley know only too well to their cost, and as is known in the city of Birmingham and in other towns and cities up and down the country, fluctuations running into millions of pounds occur almost weekly—certainly monthly—as a result of the incompetence of the right hon. Gentleman and his policies.

Despite the uncertainty about block grant entitlements, county councils and other precepting authorities are required by law to make their precepts for 1987-88 not later than 10 March, before the report has even been approved by the House, and rating authorities are required to make their rates not later than 1 April. Local authorities no longer have any right to make a supplementary rate or precept if their income from grant or other sources falls short of that taken into account when those rates or precepts were set. That, again, is the fault of the Government. The combination of lateness and uncertainty about grant entitlements for the coming financial year makes it harder for local authorities to plan sensibly, and inadequate planning leads almost inevitably to poor financial administration.

Since July, the right hon. Gentleman has made five announcements affecting grants to councils, and during that time there have been four Acts affecting local government finance. And Ministers have the gall to criticise councils for inefficiency! The Government have demonstrated an unprecedented level of bungling incompetence, and they cannot escape responsibility for the mess.

In a damning editorial, *Local Government Chronicle*, under the heading

"Ridley in a Central Mess",

says the position

"typifies the woeful mess the Environment Secretary has allowed and encouraged his senior civil servants to get him into".

In addition to the legal shambles of the Government's own creation, there has been the political fiddling of the system to buy off the much-leaked Tory revolt. How ironic it is to see Tory Members who demanded those policies being attacked by their own colleagues in local government, and by their own local Tory associations, for the capricious failures of those same policies—failures described by the editor of *Local Government Chronicle* as

"mere financial gerrymandering without accuracy,"

and, in a classic line, as the "height of loony government". How right the editor is.

All that was too much for the staunchest of Conservatives in the borough of Bromley, who watched in bemused disbelief as their grant went up and up, only to plunge down again by £3 million this year following the Secretary of State's failure to deliver his promise to make good their loss of £3 million last year — that is £6 million in two years from the staunchest of true blue supporters. How angry they must all feel.

Mr. John Hunt (Ravensbourne): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I was about to refer to the hon. Gentleman, but I shall give way.

Mr. Hunt: Does the hon. Gentleman accept the logic of Bromley's case and recognise the injustice of the court result, which has meant that Bromley is deprived of that money? Will he go on record as saying that he recognises that the court got it wrong?

Dr. Cunningham: I recognise that the London borough of Greenwich did not act on some piece of arcane local

[Dr. Cunningham]

government law dug up from the middle ages. It acted on an Act of Parliament of 1986, introduced by the Government. The hon. Gentleman voted for it. Greenwich took advantage of that Act of last year, which the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues from the London borough of Bromley supported. So we are not talking about some little error. We are not talking about some computer miscalculation. We are talking about Conservative Government law. That is what has caused the problem in the borough of Bromley. That is what Greenwich acted upon, and that is what it won the court case on. That is an accurate record of what happened.

Mr. Ridley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment. I have not finished with the hon. Member for Ravensbourne.

I say to the hon. Member for Ravensbourne and his hon. Friends from Chislehurst, Orpington and Beckenham: in view of what has happened to the Conservative borough of Bromley, will they go into the Lobby and vote for the report? Will they support the taking away of that money from their borough? Will they support the incompetence of their own Government and, even worse, the failure of their own Secretary of State to honour his promises? Will they vote for that? We shall watch with interest, and so will the voters in the borough of Bromley.

The final irony is that the hon. Member for Ravensbourne's own friends and colleagues in the local Tory association—in Tory Bromley—are now taking this Government to court to sue them because of what has happened. I can well understand the Secretary of State reaching for yet another Silk Cut and nipping out of the Cabinet Room for a quick fag, in the face of that irony and the disbelief of his colleagues around the Cabinet table.

Mr. Ridley: The question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) was not answered by the hon. Gentleman. I leave aside the point of law that is the subject of a legal action and will be decided on appeal. I have made it clear that I believe that the rate support grant distribution resulting from that decision is inequitable to the boroughs concerned. I ask the hon. Gentleman a straight question: does he think that it is equitable? Would he be in favour of the distribution being put back to what everybody thought it was, or would he not?

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman must think that all of us in the Opposition are daft. He made an allocation of resources. He then decided to change the allocation. He was challenged by several authorities. One went to court and won. The right hon. Gentleman asks us to justify those actions. Of course we would not justify them for a moment. The right hon. Gentleman has been caught fiddling the books and now even his own side, the Conservatives, are complaining about it. It is totally unjustifiable behaviour and we would not support it for a moment. We have considerable sympathy——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): Does the hon. Gentleman support Greenwich?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman had better keep quiet, or we shall come to him and some of his decisions and speeches.

We have considerable sympathy with what has happened to the people of Bromley and of the borough of Greenwich. The reality is that this shambles will not be ended until the Government are out of office and new policies for local government finance are introduced. That is how I respond to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman still has not given——

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman may not have noticed. I have not given way.

Mr. Ridley: I asked the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. If the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is not giving way, the Minister cannot intervene.

Dr. Cunningham: Astonishingly——

Mr. Ridley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No.

Astonishingly, even more legislation cannot be ruled out——

Mr. Ridley *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

The Secretary of State is asking the House of Commons to approve the report, but he is appealing against it in the House of Lords at the same time. This is absolutely unparalleled. On the one hand the House is recommended by the right hon. Gentleman to say yes to the report, and at the same time he is taking a case through the courts to have it set aside. It is cloud-cuckoo-land in the form of benighted Tory bungling. That is the reality that the right hon. Gentleman has got himself into. If he is successful in the court case, further changes will be necessary. They will affect 13 London boroughs in a major and serious way, and many other authorities in less serious ways.

Mr. Ridley: I should simply like to ask the right hon. Gentleman, when he has stopped waffling, whether he realises that Greenwich has benefited from an error to the tune of 3 million quid at the expense of Bromley, and whether he would be in favour of having a grant that is paid to the roads paid to the borough in which the roads are situated. That is the question which, three times, the hon. Gentleman has refused to answer—because, of course, he does not have the guts to say what is right.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman is now being less than candid with the House. He is falling back on the myth that somehow there was an error. There was no error. There was a change in the basis on which the grant was allocated. There was no error. It is a Government excuse for the cock-up that they have engineered. When the right hon. Gentleman lost in the courts, he announced his intention last year to change the law, and in doing so—*[Interruption.]* It is no good the right hon. Gentleman waving for his hon. Friends to intervene. They will not take any notice. It is no good sending for the Tory party equivalent of the fifth cavalry, because most of them are laughing their heads off at the predicament that the right hon. Gentleman has got himself into. I expect that some of them are even gritting their teeth at the prospect of having to walk through the Lobby to vote for this nonsense.

The reality is that no reasonable purpose can be served by the Secretary of State trying yet again to change all the figures. Rate-limited authorities in particular will lose cash and be unable to change their rates to make up the shortfall. Authorities could be forced into deficit as a result of the combined incompetence and gerrymandering of the right hon. Gentleman. When the Association of London Authorities asked the Department of the Environment about the matter, it was told:

"Ministers have not yet considered the matter".

Apparently Ministers have not even considered the implications of the changes that may result from the appeal.

The Government have made much of an alleged increase of £1 billion in aggregate Exchequer grant. It masks an increase of 15 per cent. in specific and supplementary grants and an increase of only 6 per cent. in block grant itself. That increase in specific and supplementary grants carries with it yet more central control over local government services. Much of the remaining increase in block grant—£530 million—may not materialise because of the end to grant recycling. The right hon. Gentleman suggested that the figure might be only about £200 million. I ask the obvious question: why is his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer planning, in the Budget Red Book, to recoup at least £400 million? That is what the Budget document says. The right hon. Gentleman must be aware of it. Is he trying to mislead the House in what he has been saying today? Is he trying to disguise the nature of the clawback?

The Rate Support Grants Act 1987 abolishes grant recycling, the process by which initial claims on the block grant pool are rescheduled so that all available grant is distributed. The distribution of the total block grant pool is crucially dependent upon the expenditure assumption that the Secretary of State adopts. He assumes in the report that authorities will increase their expenditure by only 2·8 per cent. in the coming financial year. This is an unrealistically low estimate. If authorities spend more than the right hon. Gentleman deems necessary, they will lose grant.

Only last week the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that general inflation would rise to 4·5 per cent.—at least the Secretary of State got that figure right. Grant-related expenditure assessments, on which grant entitlements are based, have been set at £1 billion lower than total expenditure provision. That unallocated sum will have a serious effect on grant distribution, disbenefiting high-need authorities, many of which are metropolitan authorities. It is merely a means of reintroducing expenditure targets in another guise. Severe block grant mechanisms are designed to force expenditure restraint. This is contrary to what the Secretary of State tried to say earlier about increasing expenditure. The implication of what he said was that the Government thought that that was good and wanted it, but the mechanisms is the report deliberately act against it.

The grant proposals include a continuation of severe financial penalties, which are made worse by the abolition of recycling. Many authorities lose £1 of grant or more for every additional £1 of spending, making a cost to the ratepayer of £2 or more. That penal regime is made worse by the loss of grant that is recycled to the pool. Instead, it will go direct to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who calculated in the Budget statement documents that he would recoup £400 million in that way. That is not the much smaller sum to which the Secretary of State referred.

This rate support grant report does nothing to address the criticisms of Government policy failures made by the Audit Commission in its report on the management of London authorities. The authorities concerned have made positive responses to the recommendations in that report and are acting on them. Some boroughs have already established teams to work with the Audit Commission to deal with those issues. That is a much more positive response to the report that anything that has come out of the Department of the Environment to date.

In addition to the plan to recover that £400 million from the total available to councils as set out in the Budget documents, the Chancellor and the Secretary of State outline plans in those same documents for an increased rates take of £1·5 billion. That is what the Chancellor's Red Book says. Thus, the Government are assuming that rates will rise as a result of their policies by an average of 9 per cent. The Secretary of State was trying to convey the impression that the Government were assuming that the rates increase would be 6 per cent. or less, but the Red Book directly contradicted that. Who is telling the truth—the Chancellor, or the Secretary of State? So much for the Secretary of State's claims in the House in July, in January and again today that no rate increases—or only low ones—would be necessary.

In the context of ministerial pronouncements anticipating lower rate rises, it is significant that the Treasury is forecasting a substantial rise in rates income for the coming financial year. Table 1.2 of the Financial Statement and Budget Report for 1987-88 shows that rate receipts are forecast to increase by 9 per cent.—that is the Chancellor's figure—compared with a 4·2 per cent. increase in income tax receipts and a 6 per cent. increase in general Government receipts.

Why does the Secretary of State repeat his claims, knowing that his colleague in the Cabinet, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is in charge of running the economy, does not agree and is quoting a higher figure? Is the right hon. Gentleman trying to mislead the House?

A key component in the mechanism to distribute grants to local authorities is the grant-related expenditure assessment that is assigned to every local authority, which provides a measurement of what the Government consider that each authority should spend to provide a similar level of services. For the coming financial year the GRE total will be £23,742 million, which is £961 million less than the total expenditure that local authorities anticipate.

The gap between the two totals—total expenditure and GRE—is important, because spending more than the Government's assessment — particularly above threshold—leads to a high rate of grant loss for each additional pound of expenditure. Therefore, the failure to increase the total of GRE in line with total expenditure will result in many authorities running into a higher rate of grant loss for increased spending.

Following the intense Tory lobbying from shire counties, in southern England in particular, the settlement includes a limit of 7p at ratepayer level on grant losses arising from changes in the block grant mechanism, and a limit of 12p on grant gains. The major beneficiaries of the Secretary of State's fiddling in the current financial year—compared with the Government's previous plans, as set out in October—are authorities such as Surrey,

[Dr. Cunningham]

which will receive £7·7 million extra, Hertfordshire, £6·4 million, and Hampshire, £3·9 million. Here again the Government are redirecting cash to areas that are least in need of it and away from many other areas that need it more.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): Is it not true that Hertfordshire and Surrey will receive less grant than this year? Does the change not mean that the reduction in grant has been alleviated, not that there is a new bonanza for the home counties?

Dr. Cunningham: That is true. In general, those authorities have lost grant every year under this Government. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will ponder that before voting for the motion tonight and that he will make it clear to his electors that every year people in Surrey, Hertfordshire and elsewhere have lost support for essential services such as education and social services as a direct result of Government policy. That is what the policy is about.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Have not the shire counties, such as Essex, lost grant because the Government are directing more funds to the urban and metropolitan counties? That shows that they are being immensely fair in helping counties that are Labour-controlled and, unfortunately, penalising Conservative-controlled counties.

Dr. Cunningham: I am sorry to disagree with the hon. Gentleman, because he and I are the only two hon. Members with a PhD in chemistry, but if he believes that, he will believe anything.

The reality is that every year the Government have cut what they pay to local authorities as a percentage of their expenditure. Grant has decreased from 62 per cent. in 1979-80 to less than 46 per cent. now. Each year the amount has been lower, and all authorities have suffered. The inner cities have suffered grievously as a result of Government policies. It is not a matter of taking money from the shires and giving it to the inner cities. There may have been some adjustments within the smaller total, but all authorities have lost heavily, and I am sure that in his heart of hearts the hon. Gentleman knows that, too.

The Government cheat local councils in another way. The assumption that total expenditure will increase by only 2·8 per cent. in the coming financial year is contradicted by the Financial Statement and Budget Report, which forecasts a rise in the gross domestic product deflator—the Government's own measure of the probably rise in costs across the economy—of 4·5 per cent. — a significantly higher figure. If the Government had been more honest, if that figure had been used, a higher total for local authority costs would have resulted. The Government, then, have deliberately planned a shortfall in what they are prepared to make available.

We are told that the answer to all this is a new system, a medieval solution, a poll tax with a uniform business rate attached to it—proposals already widely condemned by business, commerce, local government and political parties.

Mr. Ridley: Rubbish.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State says, "Rubbish." I can tell him that at a very recent meeting with the London chamber of commerce, even it condemned the proposals, and it wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer saying so. I do not know where the right hon. Gentleman is looking for friends in support of a poll tax with a uniform business rate, but they are not too thick on the ground. The proposals have indeed been condemned not only by Opposition parties, but by the Tory Reform Group, in a massive, damning report, in page after page of it. The Tory Reform Group has such patrons as the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), the present Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), another current Cabinet Minister, and the right hon. Gentleman the Home Secretary.

Mr. Chope: Will the hon. Gentleman read out the disclaimer on the second page of that report, which dissociates those patrons of the Tory reform Group from the content of that report?

Dr. Cunningham: Is that not typical of the Tories? All their names are on the front page to give the thing credibility and standing, but in the small print they say that they want nothing to do with it. That is typical of the Tory party's approach to these matters. No doubt the Tory manifesto will say the same. If it does not, it should, because that is what it will be like.

In addition to giving the Government effective control over almost 80 per cent. of local council finance, the social, economic and administrative implications of a poll tax are horrendous and grotesquely unfair. The veil of secrecy over the impact of a poll tax was lifted a little by the Minister of State, tantalisingly, on Monday, when apparently he embarked upon a major press briefing session about the consequencies. I am quoting the hon. Gentleman's words exactly from his Department of the Environment hand out. I have picked the one concerning Lancashire, but there are several others. This is what the Minister of State had to say about the consequences of the poll tax in Lancashire:

"For the average two-adult household in north east Lancashire, the community charge"—

that is, the poll tax—

"is likely to produce a substantial increase in the amount to be paid. This is because domestic rateable values in the area at the moment are among the lowest in the country. This means that the people in north east Lancashire are getting local authority services far more cheaply than those elsewhere. Although, when community charge is fully introduced, bills will rise, the community charge will still (on the basis of 1986-87 spending) be in the range £180 to £215 . . .

The Government is still considering what transitional arrangement might be introduced to help those in areas where bills would rise substantially as a result of the introduction of the new system."

This is the wonderful alternative to the rates, to help people. The answer is that they pay more, and we have that on the hon. Gentleman's own admission. The news will really buck up the Tories canvassing for local government elections throughout the country. We are grateful to the Minister of State for his candour, because in Blackburn, Darwen and Rossendale, Pendle, Hyndburn and elsewhere we intend to help him get his message across to people. We intend to ensure that in the local elections, and especially in those parliamentary constituencies that are marginal in

the general election, the people know exactly what the Minister of State wants them to know about the consequences of a poll tax.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Would my hon. Friend care to inform the Minister of the hostility that is building up in west Cumberland, in my hon. Friend's constituency and in my constituency, to the news already circulating about the level of new rates that would be paid by our constituents if this Government were to be allowed to win? Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the document which we have produced and which sets out in great detail the effects that this will have and shows that for the great majority of people in west Cumberland the new rates will mean a massive increase in what they pay? The only people who benefit from this new system are people who live in expensive property. They are the only beneficiaries. Is that not quite disgraceful?

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), not only for his intervention, but for all the work that he has done on the details of the local consequences of the introduction of a poll tax, not only in his constituency in the borough of Allerdale, but in my constituency in the borough of Copeland, because the same fate awaits thousands of families in west Cumbria, as he has rightly made clear.

The irony is that in my own constituency of Copeland, with an excellent Labour council, there has not been a single increase in rates for six years. Indeed, this year the Labour council of Copeland is reducing the rate, but it is to have this poll tax imposed upon it, which will force it to charge people more as a result of this Government's policies. It is exactly the same in my hon. Friend's constituency in the borough of Allerdale. People will be appalled to learn that a Tory Government will ensure that they pay more in local taxes, regardless of their income, the size of their property or anything else.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): At least in my hon. Friend's part of the world this is still a hypothetical question. Would he spare a thought for the predicament of the people in Scotland, for whom the Government have already got legislation, not only through this House, but on its way through the House of Lords? The people of Scotland are to be used as guinea pigs for this appalling new taxation.

Dr. Cunningham: I agree with my hon. Friend and I think that the people of Scotland agree with him. The way things are going, the Tory party will be lucky if it is not completely wiped out in Scotland when the general election takes place. The same is likely to happen in the north of England, too.

It is also very significant that the Government are being evasive about rebates and reductions for those families and individuals facing financial difficulties. Everyone will have to pay at least 20 per cent. of the tax, regardless of income. Even rebates may apply only to a fixed amount, less than the total tax charged, according to a recent article in *New Society*.

While Ministers announce a speeding up of these unfair proposals, they operate a go-slow on the highly sensitive issue of rebates. It took the Prime Minister more than two months to reply to a letter from Councillor Jack Loyden, the leader of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, on this issue and then her reply was completely vacuous, giving no answer at all. As I have said, even the Tory Reform Group, with several existing and many former Tory Cabinet members as patrons, has rubbished the Government's own proposals.

The country is facing a mounting crisis in housing in parts of our major cities, in education and training and, not least, in research establishments and the consequent brain drain. Local government has a crucial responsibility in many of these policy areas. Undermining local government, demeaning it, as the right hon. Gentleman does every time he speaks in the House and elsewhere, serves the nation ill. Undermining local government finance, taking more central powers, and preventing better and more effective investment in people is guaranteed to make those problems worse. As the new director-general of the Confederation of British Industries has said, city technology colleges are an irrelevance in the face of these problems, for without decent homes, good schools and better training and skills our country is doomed. No amount of manipulation of trade figures and unemployment statistics, in a post-Budget, pre-election Tory propaganda effort can solve those critical problems.

Labour party policy on new skills, jobs and industrial strategy offers effective solutions and a clear choice to the people. A clear majority of the British people prefer investment in jobs and services to tax cuts. The majority support investment in people—in ourselves and in our communities, schools and hospitals. That cannot be achieved without effective, improved and strengthened local government, which is an urgent national requirement. Those objectives cannot be achieved by this Government, by their policies or by reports such as this. That is why we oppose it.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Act:

Consolidated Fund Act 1987.

Rate Support Grant

Question again proposed.

4.50 pm

Sir Bernard Braine: (Castle Point): I do not mean to be unkind to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), but frankly I was unimpressed by his argument. He was eloquently unconvincing. The fact remains that, under the present Government—leaving aside what I am about to say about them—spending on local government services has increased substantially in real terms and they are not to be castigated for trying to impose financial restraint and introducing discipline in what is after all a massive sector of public expenditure.

We are light years away from a Labour Chancellor going cap in hand and in frantic haste to the International Monetary Fund to beg for financial support, at a time when the average rate of inflation was 15 per cent. peaking to well over 25 per cent. at the end. That is long past and best forgotten. Methinks the hon. Gentleman was protesting too much.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

Having said that, I feel that I must intervene, albeit briefly, to protest against the unfair distribution of grant as it affects my own county. For years, Essex has been prudently administered. It was prudently administered under the last Labour Government and it has been prudently administered under the present Government. Throughout, it has been among the lower-spending local authorities.

Indeed, I recall a previous Secretary of State for the Environment suggesting that the county council should call in consultants to find out whether further savings could be made. The county council took that advice, and the consultants reported that everything possible was being done. Indeed, my right hon. Friend's predecessor praised Essex here in the Chamber for its prudent administration. Yet, year after year, Essex has been penalised under the grant support system and year after year the pleas of my hon. Friends who represent consituencies in the county have been ignored.

This year's settlement is palpably unfair and unacceptable to us. As my right hon. Friend knows—it is best to be honest and straight about these matters—no Essex Back-Bench Members will go into the Division Lobby tonight in his support.

Nor is that all. A further blow has been delivered as a result of the administrative muddle to which reference has already been made. I accept the explanation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I do not think that he personally is to blame in any way, but nevertheless the blow has fallen. As a result, Essex will lose a further £2 million on top of what it has lost in this year's distribution of grant. I find it unbelievable that we should have been penalised in favour of high-spending local authorities elsewhere. That does not make any sense. It goes against the letter and the spirit of what the Government have been seeking to do. It adds insult to injury, and we cannot accept it.

Will my hon. Friend assure us when he answers the debate that if the court decides—as I hope it will—that the Government were right all along, then the £2 million will be repaid to Essex automatically and without further argument? If, on the other hand, the court decides otherwise—it would be quite improper for me to say whether such a decision would be right or wrong—a situation will have arisen for which Essex county council can in no way be blamed. If that should happen, will the Government make up the shortfall of £2 million in some other way? That, in my submission, is the least that should be done. The treatment of Essex is completely unacceptable to its Members of Parliament. I ask, therefore, whether the Government are now prepared to do justice to our county.

4.58 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): First, I shall deal with matters arising from two earlier rate support grant settlement reports. We are again dealing with retrospection and changes of the rules, although control of some councils has changed since 1985-86. That is bizarre. We are having to go back to 1985-86 to deal with matters that were fully dealt with by the councils at that time.

There are now one or two gains for administration for that year, in that authorities could set aside money spent on disaster funds and regional crime drug squads. One question that has been raised with me is the loss of interest on money wrongly withheld during the miners' strike, which affects Derbyshire and Cheshire in particular. Perhaps the Minister will address that point in his reply.

In the 1986-87 settlement, the increase in the rate of the police-specific grant to 51 per cent. appears to be a gain to local authorities, but in fact it is a reduction of 1 per cent. in the block grant and an example of further centralisation.

As the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said, the Government determine central expenditure on local authorities in ways which bear capriciously on those authorities. It is strange that the Government determine centrally what is to be spent and then decide which councils have been sinners rather than saints in the administration of those resources. Whose money is it? It is certainly not the local authorities' money, but it is not the Government's either. It is public money, of which elected representatives are simply the trustees. We must consider who should be the real trustees and determine what expenditure is realistic, and where the blame lies if blame it be, or where the commendation lies if people in local government have behaved with due circumspection and attention to the balance between services and economy.

The Government's cynicism and arrogance are reaching staggering proportions. They fix the rules centrally, they determine appropriate levels of expenditure centrally, and then they fix the penalties centrally. Finally, they castigate the councils against which they are determined to discriminate. It is reprehensible that the Government should cynically take that attitude, giving no recognition to the fact that they have caused the local authorities' problems.

I compare that action with the attitude of the Minister of State. I disagree with him, just as Labour Members disagree with his policy, but at least we get the feeling that he understands what he is doing. The Secretary of State never gives the impression that he has a clue what he is doing. That is a great problem. His short speech today failed entirely to address the reports that he was introducing. He used his entire speech to castigate and blame the Opposition for what is his responsibility.

In Committee on the Local Government Bill, the Minister and other Members have been grappling with the analogy of whistle blowing, as if we were discussing some kind of football match. We have enjoyed the analogy, but to fix the rules and penalties centrally is rather like the Secretary of State saying that the home team will always have 13 players and then blaming the away team for losing. Those who have lost have done so because of the Government's policies, not because of decisions taken locally in the county councils.

Let me take some examples. In three neighbouring councils in Sussex, arbitrary assumptions about spending have meant that the Conservative-controlled council of Hove will receive from the Government £67·30 per resident, the Conservative-controlled district council of Worthing will receive £36·66 per resident, but the alliance-controlled council of Adur will receive precisely £11·86 per resident, yet the councillors in Adur are castigated for putting up the rates. If the Government determine what revenue will accrue to the district councils, it is monstrous for them to accuse councillors of being responsible for a high rate rise.

Again, the Secretary of State made great play of the results of rate fixing in the counties for 1987-88, but he failed to relate the variations that have occurred within the different bands of local authorities under different party control. For example, he made the point that the Conservative-administered county councils had a low average rate rise, but that hides the fact that the rate rises have varied from 2 per cent. at the lowest to 17·5 per cent. in Northamptonshire at the highest. That range is mainly caused by the different limitations imposed by the Government and the Secretary of State.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): The hon. Gentleman said that Northamptonshire had the highest rate rise. In fact, Bedfordshire had the highest, at 21·3 per cent. He must get his facts right first.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If the hon. Gentleman had listened carefully, he would have realised that I was talking about the Conservative-administered county councils. I will come to Bedfordshire later. The hon. Gentleman need not worry about that. I was referring to the different categories mentioned by the Secretary of State.

The Labour-controlled county councils have a rate rise which varies from as low as 7 per cent. to as high as 12·5 per cent. Therefore, the average may be higher than those in the Conservative-controlled authorities. But then the Secretary of State said that the one jewel in the alliance crown, the Isle of Wight, had a rate rise of 10 per cent. But that is the only authority with an overall alliance majority. Therefore, there is no way in which to balance one council against averages for the others. Again, that is because the Government fixed the limitation centrally. They fix the grant-related expenditure centrally and then castigate us.

When we come to those authorities with minority administrations, we find a very different state of affairs. The county councils with a Labour minority administration have a 6·5 per cent. average rate rise, those led by the alliance a 7·75 per cent. and those led by the Conservatives a 9·5 per cent. increase. It is ludicrous, therefore, to relate those figures to one another in the way that the Secretary of State did.

The Secretary of State was also selective. If one party opts out of its share of the administration and there is no overall majority on a council, it is ridiculous then to complain about the rate-fixing thereafter. The interesting fact about Bedfordshire is that the Conservatives opted out of any responsibility for controlling the county. If they are not prepared to negotiate and make their case for the rate levels that need to be fixed, it is wrong for the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) to complain.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The Labour party wanted a 25 per cent. increase in rates, the Liberals wanted a 19 per cent. increase and the Conservatives wanted only a 10 per cent. increase. The alliance ganged up with the Labour party to increase the figure. That increase is due to excessive expenditure in that area, and the hon. Gentleman should know that. When the alliance has any control in an area, the situation is made much worse.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Gentleman rests his case purely on what happened at a council meeting. He should know that for years the Conservative party has opted out of any decision-making. That is the problem. If the hon. Gentleman wants to see the difference in areas where his party has not opted out, he should look at Avon county council. That is one case where we can hand out some credit. There the rate increase is 1·7 per cent., with alliance support. The hon. Gentleman cannot castigate one party alone. If the Secretary of State wants to deal with the mathematics of this and throw figures around the House, he should not be selective; he should look at all the different figures in the different councils.

Let me take one more example to illustrate how ludicrous such central control is. When the Budget debate approached, Somerset county council agreed its expenditure and the amount to be taken from reserve. But then the Conservative party on the council proposed a precept, lower than that then being discussed, of 198p in the pound. That would have meant a revenue deficit of £1 million. In other words, it was proposing precisely what those in Liverpool were surcharged for—planning a deficit on the revenue account. It was not by any means on the same scale, but nevertheless the principle is the same. Such matters cannot be determined centrally in that way.

Taking flowback out of the consideration has clobbered my city council of Leeds almost as much as any other district council. Of course, I and my colleagues have criticised spending priorities within the limitations in Leeds, but the Labour-controlled Leeds city council, with the agreement of the leader of the Liberal group, has, over the years, set increases at less than the level of inflation.

If the Government wish to play fair by my city council, as the right hon. Member for Castle Point was saying about Essex, there should be an extra £3 million from the Government just to keep pace with inflation. It is nonsense to castigate councils for increasing rates when the amount coming from the Exchequer has declined, thus forcing up rates.

The policy proposed by the Government is wrong both in conception and justice. Its key factor is that it separates the power to tax from the power to spend, and artificially translates those decisions from the place where they should be taken. That is not particularly new. Way back in the *Municipal Review* of May 1974, the city treasurer and director of finance, Mr. Fred Tolson, of my city council wrote:

"unless some workable RSG system is evolved after due research, giving Exchequer aid related to spending needs and taxable (not just rateable) capacity, local government will decline into mere agency for whatever Government happens to be in office . . . there is nothing to choose between the two major parties when it comes to imposing a political solution on the complex grant issues of the day, issues that have been chewed over for weary months by officials on both sides of the negotiating table, who are more hampered by lack of hard facts about current levels of expenditure and inflation than by their affiliations."

That is precisely what has happened. Local government is declining into a mere agency for whatever Government happen to be in office.

I reiterate what I said earlier. If the Government are right, why on earth cannot they carry the support of their own colleagues within local government? Why has the Conservative leader of the Dorset county council had to tell the Government that they are not living in the real world?

What has happened to the men of stature in the Conservative party in local government? Where have they gone? What has happened to the Sir Maxwell Entwistles in Liverpool? The Tory party controlled Liverpool city council for 17 years after the war, yet now it is reduced to a tiny group of seven. When I became a member of Leeds

[Mr. Meadowcroft]

city council in 1968, it had 101 Conservative members out of 120, and that was before reorganisation, when it took in more of the leafy suburbs. In the past 20 years, the Conservatives have controlled Islington and Sheffield, albeit briefly. But no one can conceive of them doing so today. The Tory party's men of stature have disappeared from local government.

Where have the Lord Marshalls or Lord Bellwins of Leeds gone? Today, such men are nowhere to be found. The Tory party hardly exists in the urban areas. It is totally demoralised and one can see its centralising tendency not just in this House, but in local government as well. Now it is Conservatives such as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) who carry on the battle here for those people from the districts and the older cities.

Every time the Government introduce measures for local government, they represent a huge vote of no confidence in Conservative councils, candidates and Conservative campaigning. If Labour-controlled local government is so bad, why is it that the Government cannot defeat Labour at local level? If alliance-controlled local government is so bad, why is it that the Government cannot defeat the alliance at local level? The Government set up political targets in local government as a diversion from their lack of policy and lack of understanding—a diversion from the true argument.

The Government's anger and rage is synthetic. It is about time that they gave up their attempts to control local government — they will never succeed. They can only continue this campaign until the general election and not a day after.

5.10 pm

Mr. John Hunt (Ravensbourne): I am glad to have the opportunity to participate in this debate. The House will appreciate that it has particular significance for my constituency and the London borough of Bromley. Therefore, I propose to confine my remarks to what has become known as the "Bromley error".

Let me say at once that my borough takes no pleasure in having become part of parliamentary vocabulary. The revised rate support grant figures now before the House follow inexorably from the bombshell that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State dropped upon Bromley on the afternoon of 5 March. I must tell him that his statement to the House was greeted with horror and disbelief throughout my borough.

My right hon. Friend will be aware that that statement came just four days before Bromley council's rate-fixing meeting. It meant that, at a stroke, and on the eve of the rate decision, Bromley was deprived of about 6·5 million, which until that moment it had confidently expected to receive.

Anyone who has anything to do with local government finance will be aware of the protracted and painstaking way in which a borough's estimates are prepared and discussed for many months. They will realise the traumatic impact of a sudden last-minute decision of this nature. The leader of Bromley council, Councillor Dennis Barkway, has rightly referred to it as a

"crippling additional financial burden"

As a direct result, Bromley's rate has had to be increased by about 4 per cent. to meet the new circumstances.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend will readily concede that, over the years, the London borough of Bromley has established an outstanding reputation for prudent spending and sound administration. I believe that it is one of the best-run councils not only within greater London, but in the country. Therefore, it is especially galling that, through no fault of its own, Bromley must now impose a much heavier burden upon its ratepayers than was forecast. That burden cannot be justified by any test of logic or fairness. It has been a grave blow to Bromley and its citizens.

I readily concede that my right hon. Friend has no personal responsibility for the situation that has arisen. The House will be aware that the original error, from which all the consequent problems have flowed, was made back in 1985, long before my right hon. Friend came to the Department.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman keeps on describing this matter as an error, as though some administrative mistake had been made with pencil and paper or the wrong figures fed into the computer. That is not the case. The Government decided on one set of decisions, but they then faced objections from Bromley and others. As a result, the Government decided to do something else. They made a conscious decision to make the change. The Greenwich result in the court forced the Government to return to their initial decision. There was no error — nothing happened by accident; it was the result of deliberate acts by the Government and Ministers.

Mr. Hunt: I am not sure that I can agree with the hon. Gentleman. In the autumn of 1985, Bromley carried out an analysis of the rate support allocation—of which it had been notified—for 1986-87. At that time, Bromley discovered that, far from taking account of its obligation to maintain 60 miles of metropolitan road that it had inherited from the GLC, the grant had been reduced. I maintain that that was an error rather than a policy decision. The commendable efforts that have been made by the Government to put that glaring error right have led to the further complications.

With all the sophisticated computerised equipment available to the Department, one wonders how an obvious mistake of this magnitude could possibly have been made and, once made, have gone undetected. We can only hope that the official responsible is no longer in his post. If there was ever a case for dismissal or demotion, surely this is it. One can only devoutly pray that the official in question will never be allowed within a thousand miles of the draft legislation for the abolition of domestic rates.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The hon. Gentleman is known to be a reasonable man. I put to him that it is an important constitutional convention that Ministers, not officials, are responsible and answerable for decisions. Does the hon. Gentleman deny that it was Ministers who agreed the original approach to the allocation of grant-related expenditure previously held by the GLC?

Mr. Hunt: I am merely saying that the calculations were presumably made by an official and that a mistake was made in those calculations that was not brought to the notice of the Ministers until a late stage. Once Ministers were aware of what happened, they took immediate steps to put the matter right. Those actions have since been challenged in the courts; hence the impasse that we have reached today.

My right hon. Friend will recall that, in the exchanges that followed his statement to the House on 5 March, I referred to the "clearest commitments" that had been given to me by Ministers. On 6 March last year, hon. Members may recall that I tabled a written question asking the Secretary of State for the Environment whether

"he can now say how he proposes to deal with the issue raised by the London borough of Bromley regarding the level of grant payment for the upkeep of the highways to be transferred from the Greater London council to Bromley after abolition."

My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning outlined the way in which he intended to deal with the matter and categorically stated:

"These changes will mean that Bromley will receive the proper amount of grant for taking over responsibility for highway maintenance in Bromley from the GLC." — [*Official Report*, 6 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. *280*.]

Nothing could be clearer. That is why Bromley council is now so bitter about what has happened. The leader of Bromley council takes the view that, in the light of the Greenwich judgment, Ministers should simply have increased the size of the rate support grant pool and made a compensatory payment to Bromley. However, I recognise that that would have been extremely difficult and might have created further problems with the courts. On balance, therefore, I consider that it is preferable to await the result of the appeal.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is firmly on the record as saying — he said it again in the House today — that he regards the result of the High Court decision as inequitable. I certainly hope that the somewhat eccentric judgment will be set aside in due course. I wish my right hon. Friend and his lawyers every success in that endeavour. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will give some sign of the likely time scale in the matter. The ratepayers of Bromley and Bromley council are anxious to have the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity. I hope that my hon. Friend will do whatever he can to speed up the legal process. We do not want the matter to drag on for months.

Perhaps my hon. Friend will also confirm the anticipation that was expressed in a letter that I received yesterday from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, to which the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) also referred. In part, the letter states:

"if the Secretary of State is successful in his appeal against the Greenwich decision, a further set of proposals may be put forward for 1987-88."

Naturally, in spite of the sneering remarks made by the hon. Member for Copeland earlier in the debate, such an outcome would indeed be satisfactory from Bromley's point of view. It again underlines the immense difficulty that such continual shifts and changes in grant allocation create for local authorities. As the hon. Member for Copeland pointed out, no fewer than four consultative papers in respect of the 1987-88 settlement have been produced. An allocation on 3 October 1986 provided Bromley with £51.91 million. The allocation on 3 December 1986 gave it £53.96 million. Another allocation on 13 January pushed it up marginally to £54.1 million. On 5 March, the body blow came when the allocation was cut to £50.87 million.

The letter from CIPFA states:

"Central government often stresses the need for better administration. Local government is entitled to expect central government to help rather than hinder the achievement of that objective."

I hope that message will be learned and digested by the Department of the Environment, so that we shall never again have to go through the agony and uncertainty of the past few months that have created much heartache for my right hon. Friend.

I pay tribute to the most courteous way in which my right hon. Friend has received representations from the four hon. Members whose constituencies are in the Bromley area. It has been a trying time for ratepayers and for the London borough of Bromley. I share my right hon. Friend's hope that the matter will soon be satisfactorily resolved, to the benefit of my borough.

5.23 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): One thing about which I am pleased is that I have not been a member of a council for the past few years. Because of the incompetence of the Government and the Secretary of State for the Environment, problems have consistently arisen at local level which could and should have been avoided.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the chairman of the Bromley council finance committee, as I do for all people on finance committees of various councils who have faced problems arising out of the Government's attitude. Local authorities have been thrown into total uncertainty. For example, there were six separate announcements on the 1987-88 rate support grant and five sets of grant entitlements were issued.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has given me a good briefing and perhaps the facts should go on the record. On 22 July 1986 a Department of the Environment consultation paper was produced on the 1987-88 rate support grant. In October 1986 a further Department of the Environment consultation paper with provisional grant entitlements for 1987-88 was issued. On 3 December 1986 a third consultation paper, showing revised grant figures as a result of better information being available, was released. On 13 January 1987 the Secretary of State announced his firm intentions and the grant figures were again revised. On 23 February 1987 the Department of the Environment advised authorities that the grant figures issued on 13 January were incorrect because of an error in calculating the grant-related expenditure for housing revenue account, and revised figures were issued. On 5 March 1987 the Secretary of State announced that he was changing grant entitlements yet again because of the implications of the Greenwich court case.

Over the same period there have been major legislative changes in the operation of local government finance. I refer to the Rate Support Grants Act 1986 and the Rate Support Grants Act 1987. The calculations were made illegally and legislation was required to make them legal.

Just over a week ago 47 Liverpool Labour councillors were disqualified from holding office and are now being surcharged. Their crime was that they were late in setting a rate. They were faced with the terrible problem of interest charges that amounted to £106,000. Now they are faced with an additional bill of about £500,000. Of course, a certain number of legal people will do rather well out of it, but the fact is that the councillors are disqualified.

The Secretary of State presented hon. Members with three documents on local government in England. He is

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

not criticised. Nobody is surcharging him. The hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) mentioned millions of pounds, the location of which Bromley council did not know. Will the Secretary of State be surcharged for the millions of pounds involved? Will he be disqualified from holding a place in the House of Commons? As a matter of fact, he is one of the Prime Minister's favourite Ministers. I am not surprised. He has done more damage to local govenment and to bus operations than any other Minister. He is an absolute disgrace. I would not only disqualify him; I would kick him out of the House of Commons right now. He should be kicked out. Those who support him should also be thrown out of the House of Commons.

The terrible crime of the people of Liverpool is that they did what they said they would do. They said that they would build houses for the people. They have done so. They said that they would keep down the rents of those who live in local authority houses, and they have done so. They said that they would build nice sports centres to take the youngsters off the streets. They have done so. Of course they got into financial difficulties, but the reason was that since this Government have been in office the rate support grant has been reduced by over £350 million. I agree with my hon. friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that the cuts apply to every local authority, but I am dealing with Liverpool and the problems that it faces.

I am not surprised that the Secretary of State for the Environment is leaving the Chamber. He never likes to listen to the truth. He is one of the most abusive Ministers. Whenever hon. Members want to tackle him about anything, his answer is to get up and walk out of the Chamber. I am not surprised. I wish that he would walk out for good. It would be very good for this country.

The Liverpool councillors have their counterparts in Lambeth. Lambeth councillors also fought for the people of Lambeth, yet one of the biggest disasters that this country has ever known, the Secretary of State for the Environment, is allowed to go scot-free. This is an absolute disgrace. With his free market philosophy and his narrow sectarian outlook, it is no wonder that he is one of the Prime Minister's favourites. I say again that he ought to go.

Since 1979, the rate support grant has been reduced throughout the country, but particularly in the large cities. Those who live in the inner cities, particularly where there are high levels of unemployment, as in the north, have suffered considerable hardship. Although the services in those areas are stretched to the limit, the needs of the people who live there are being disregarded. Their needs are great. People require houses but there are long waiting lists. The result is overcrowding. Areas such as mine need additional support, but they are not getting it.

When Liverpool went to the Government, all that it asked for was the £30 million that represented part of what it had lost because of the cut in rate support grant, but it did not get it. Why was it that the first thing that the temporary minority administration in Liverpool did was to ask the Government for £30 million? It did it because Liverpool requires that money. Additional grant aid is needed by areas with high levels of unemployment and with the problems that are caused today by life in the inner cities.

The rate support grant settlement ought to be based on an analysis of social and economic needs. This settlement does not even begin to do that. It is neither effective nor fair. The Government constantly tell us that local authorities are high spenders. The same record about profligate local authorities was played today, but local authority expenditure has not been as great as Government expenditure since 1979.

Local authorities are entitled to money for their housing investment programmes. Liverpool's housing investment programme for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 has been cut by 9·8 per cent., but housing is required on a greater scale than ever before. In 1985-86 the HIP allocation was £31 million and in 1986-87 it was £27·5 million. For 1987-88 it is £24·8 million. That demonstrates this Government's attitude towards areas where there is high unemployment and where there are problems of the kind that are faced by Liverpool. The local authorities have not been irresponsible. It is the Government who have been completely irresponsible.

Even if the next election is not in June or September, this Parliament will not last for very much longer. We are at the fag end of it. After the next general election, Conservative Members, in diminished numbers, will be sitting on this side of the House. *[Interruption.]* Many people do not believe that; they believe what they read in the newspapers. I do not believe what I read in the newspapers. I believe what I hear when I talk to my constituents and to other people.

The days of this Government are numbered. When they have been removed from office, a Labour Government will have to introduce a completely different rate support grant system. We shall have to get rid of what I can only describe as the abortion that has been introduced by this Government. We shall have to abolish the terrible system that has been forced upon us by them. Large-scale investment in housing will be needed. Housing construction will be the way to get our people back to work, particularly in the areas of greatest need.

After the local government elections in May, local authorities should be asked to draw up their plans for housing and other needs so that the new Labour Government will know what local authorities require and what money will be needed so that they can get on with the job. I should like a conference to be held in my area at which the local authority, Government Departments and the trade unions could discuss what is needed. When a Labour Government are returned to power, the rate support grant system will be scrapped and we shall assess the social and economic needs of each area.

In my opinion, the Secretary of State for the Environment should go. He has the anti-Midas touch. Everything that he touches does not turn to gold; it turns to ashes.

5.39 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): The hon. Members for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) seem to have forgotten that it was a Labour Secretary of State who first expressed major concern that local government expenditure had risen to unacceptable levels. It is fascinating how these matters are forgotten when a party is in opposition. The hon. Member for Copeland seemed anxious to defend the wholly irresponsible expenditure of some authorities. One of the problems in terms of local authority finance is that a

significant number of Left-wing Labour authorities have spent, spent and spent. Their failure to control expenditure has created problems for the mass of local government.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I hold no torch for the policies of the councils to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, but why, if they are so bad, are he and his colleagues unable to defeat them locally? Why is it that in Manchester, for instance, the proportion of the Conservative vote has declined to about 20 per cent.? If Conservatives are failing locally, why should they expect help from big brother in Westminster?

Mr. Wood: I intend to come to that point later in my speech. However, let us be quite clear why that is so. It is because only a small minority of the electorate in that area are cost losers as a result of the way in which they vote. If many people are employed by a local authority, if many people are not paying rates for one reason or another and if large amounts of money are coming from business, commerce or rate support grant, it is hardly surprising that the electorate is biased in its judgment.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If that were true, why is the alliance in Liverpool able to outvote Labour by policies put forward in contradistinction to the spending policies of the Labour council?

Mr. Wood: I am interested to know that the alliance has, in general, been outvoting Labour. My understanding is that the arrangement in Liverpool at the moment—in some ways, sadly—may not be permanent.

Many of the problems which have beset local authorities over the past 10 years or more were perceived not just by the Conservative party but by the Labour Government when they were in power. That Labour Government did not succeed too well in controlling some of the madcap spending of local authorities, and it must be said that this Government have also had difficulty.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): Did that Labour Government spend money on building council houses?

Mr. Wood: That Labour Government did build council houses. Indeed, they reduced the number of council houses being built each year.

I shall discuss some of the aspects which are peculiar to the rate support grant in terms of Hertfordshire. I am particularly grateful for the careful hearing that the Minister of State gave to hon. Members and county councillors from Hertfordshire. He agreed to look at the particular problems of the county. He did more than provide tea and sympathy; he did something about those problems and improved the rate support grant.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): My hon. Friend is carrying the Hertfordshire banner in the debate, but is it not true that that was the first time that any Minister had listened to any of the Hertfordshire pleas for help over the last five or six years? We are exceedingly grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson) for his kind consideration and his realisation of the problems of reducing the rate support grant in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Wood: I am grateful to the Minister of State. My attitude to making representations to Ministers is that if at first one does not succeed, one should try, try and try again.

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that, for every one of the previous five years, Hertfordshire Conservative Members have been shown the door and told no by Conservative Ministers?

Mr. Wood: I shall not confirm anything of the sort. If my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) makes his own speech in due course he may be able to develop that particular point. I have represented my constituency since 1983 and when I have been to see Ministers I have been given sympathetic hearings. I am glad to say that when we effectively and forcefully presented our case on this occasion, it was heard and accepted.

When counties have been pursuing a policy of relative moderation in terms of expenditure, those local authorities have a right to expect that the rate support grant and financial support from the Government will remain satisfactory.

It is necessary, in considering local government expenditure, for the local electorate to be able to perceive that a responsible local authority is able, as a result, to provide a low rate for people in that area. Where that does not happen the electorate have every right to be discontented and their representatives have even more right to be discontented. I am grateful for the review that was carried out of the rate support grant and for the changes that were made in safety nets and so on.

I should now like to pursue what the prospects may be until we get the major change in local government finance that we hope to see after the general election. It would be disturbing for local authorities if they found that the rate support grant movements in the intervening years, prior to major changes in local government finance, were adverse in an unfair way. Therefore, I ask the Minister to pay particular attention in the coming two or three years to the situation that may apply to counties such as Hertfordshire, Surrey, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Essex, and ensure that the rate support grant position does not deteriorate in a way that would be contradictory to the situation that may exist after the change in the financing of local government.

The difficulty is that, in terms of the rate support grant system that we now have, the principle is sound. It endeavours to make some tolerably objective measures of need in different areas. The previous system of rewarding high spenders with more grant needed replacement. That is all right so far in terms of principle; it is when we come to the practice that the difficulties arise.

The rate support grant system—this has been said by a multitude of people before—is incomprehensible to almost everyone. It is incomprehensible to nearly all hon. Members. It is incomprehensible to all councillors. I believe that it is incomprehensible to 99·9999 per cent. of the electorate. I deliberately use six significant figures, just as we have six significant figures or more in so many of the measures of need that we see in the local government finance document appendices. It is absurd that multipliers of various items of expenditure should run to that number of decimal places. Like the hon. Member for Copeland I was involved in science. If one conducted an experiment that was accurate to only one or two decimal places, it did not matter how good the computer or calculator was because to come up with an answer accurate to six, seven or eight decimal places was grotesquely misleading, confusing and unhelpful.

Mr. Richard Page: Does my hon. Friend agree that in Hertfordshire there is no calculation about the ability of the ratepayers to pay? The average income of the people of Hertfordshire is not at a level to justify the high rates that will ratchet up year by year and increase the demands on ratepayers' pockets.

Mr. Wood: My hon. Friend is right. Many of the figures presented in the tabulations before us have an apparent accuracy and objectivity that is wholly false because, quite reasonably, a variety of political judgments have been made about which things should be regarded as significant and which things should be left on one side.

I was involved in local government and I remember a debate on the magic item E7, which relates to notional housing revenue account surplus. The decision about that item was that where local authorities charged rents that were low relative to their localities, they might be expected to transfer sums to their general revenue account. As a result, the rate support grant could be lower. The amount that followed from that move could, for some local authorities, be several million pounds. Quite rightly, the way that item was handled was changed and the change affected the support grant received by some local authorities by well over 50 per cent.

To say, on the one hand, that we can have changes for justifiable political reasons that have an effect of 50 per cent. or more on the rate support grant that a local authority receives, and, on the other, that figures should go down to six or seven decimal places is the height of absurdity. When one reaches that number of decimal places, one can be certain that the tabulations will be placed at the bottom of a file because people will not understand them and, more significantly, the electorate will not understand them.

If the electorate do not understand the basis on which local government finance applies, they may make rather ridiculous decisions about the merits or otherwise of local government candidates. The system must be simple and straightforward. It must also allow for a reasonable constraint on expenditure. In an ideal world, that constraint should be exercised at the wish of the local electorate rather than necessarily at the behest of central Government.

Because of the complexities of the present rate support system and the inadequacies of local government finance in terms of who pays, we have been forced into a system where, year by year, the Government have repeatedly tried to introduce alternative means of controlling quite excessive expenditure. The Government's efforts to control that have not worked very well, because the irresponsible have continued to be irresponsible, except in cases where, because of rate capping, they have been obliged, at least to a certain degree, to toe the line.

Mr. Richard Page: I apologise to my hon. Friend for intervening again. I promise that this will be the last time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be addressed through the Chair to the House and not to the hon. Member who is speaking.

Mr. Page: Does my hon. Friend agree that the position is even more disastrous? In Hertfordshire, some houses are cheek by jowl with houses in the London area. Authorities in the London area that are guilty of extreme over-expenditure are given a weighting in favour of their rate support grant to give them more money. Herfordshire, which has the same problems, is then penalised. Is that not a further injustice in the system?

Mr. Wood: It is a grotesque injustice that in the London area there is effectively a 25 per cent. allowance from which the home counties do not benefit in any way. For exactly equivalent services one could pay considerable lower rates in a council adjacent to Hertfordshire or one of the other home counties. That is quite unreasonable.

In Hertfordshire the rates levied on the average person are approximately 30 per cent. higher than the national average, but the incomes of people in Hertfordshire are about 12 or 13 per cent. higher than the national average. Again, that is a massive injustice which has been provided for in London but not in the home counties. It is one of the things that hon. Members for Hertfordshire constituencies have campaigned about for years, with singular lack of success.

These issues of discontent lead me to speak about future prospects. I welcome the prospect of a change to the community charge and to a uniform business rate. Even more, I welcome a simplification of the rate support grant system. It is perfectly reasonable in the financing of local government to provide a community charge system of paying. As has been said, the vast number of services provided by local government are related to people, not to the properties that they occupy. A very small percentage of such services relate to property. Therefore, the proposals to introduce a community charge seems wholly reasonable.

It is also reasonable to have a level community charge rather than to have an alternative, such as a local income tax, because it is appropriate that the redistribution of incomes implicit in income tax should be on a national rather than a local basis.

Mr. Straw: Does the hon. Gentleman think that there should be any rebate within the poll tax for people on low incomes? If so, at what level does he think it should start?

Mr. Wood: I support the view that for those on very low incomes there should be a rebate which will allow perhaps 20 per cent. of the charge to be paid by the individual and 80 per cent. by the rebate. That seems a reasonable sort of balance because it makes the individual aware and conscious of the costs of local government and the relatively high costs of some local authorities compared with others and does not impose an unreasonable burden on people on low incomes. That is a perfectly acceptable protection for those with particularly low incomes.

There is a strong case to be made for a uniform business rate. In the Liverpools and Newcastles, the rates being charged are such as to deter businesses from going to the very places where there are masses of people desperately seeking work.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Where is the hon. Gentleman's evidence that businesses have been deterred by the rates from setting up in places such as Newcastle?

Mr. Wood: I have no statistical evidence, but I have the evidence of business men who have spoken about rates and told me that, when they are contemplating a move, one of the major factors that they take into account is the level of rates. I know of one or two businesses that have expressed concern, when they were thinking about moving to my local authority area, about the relatively high level

of rates there, and in one or two other districts in the county of Hertfordshire. They have told me that that is one of the judgments that they make. I see no reason to disbelieve them.

It would be false logic to assume that if the rates charged for businesses in, say, the Wokingham area were about half those charged in, say, the Newcastle area and one had the advantages of, say, Heathrow, people would choose to go to Newcastle rather than to Wokingham. If they had the combination of the benefit of lower rates and the convenience of an airport, other things being equal, they would go where the lower rate is. That is obvious, but we have the tragedy of many local authorities deterring businesses, and businesses may not bother to go there to have a discussion on the subject because they can see figures and statistics on the rates.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I fully support my hon. Friend in his assessment that high rates deter businesses from opening or continuing in a particular area. However, might there not be a little difficulty when the new community charge comes in if the commercial rate is dealt with on a national rather than local basis? Will that not take away many of the advantages that businesses have of going to well-managed areas? Should we not encourage the Government to consider relating commercial rates to the locality in which they operate, and not doing this on a national basis?

Mr. Wood: I hope that the people working in the businesses in various areas will, because of their community charge, put pressure on the local authority to operate economically. That seems an appropriate way to move. Although businesses and commerce now have a right to be consulted on the way in which local authorities are spending their money and the way in which they are going to place their rates, nevertheless, sadly, the influence that businesses and commerce have on the rates is minimal. I wish that it were otherwise. On the other hand, the impact that the community charge will have in terms of causing people to endeavour to influence their local authority will be much greater.

As I have already said, both those things depend on a simplification of the rate support grant system. The proposals for a removal of some of the penalty arrangements seem to me to be wholly desirable. While I can understand the reasons for those penalty conditions being introduced, I believe that they serve to confuse rather than help the electorate in their judgment of the merits of a local authority.

We have heard much today about reductions in rate support grant. Some of those reductions have followed from budgeted over-expenditure so that increased local expenditure has been combined with reduced rate support grant, and the local authority has blamed the increase in the rates on the reduction in rate support grant. The electorate become confused and the council becomes less accountable, when the whole objective of our moves on rate support grant and the financing of local government must be to make a council much more accountable.

I hope that, in terms of the assessment of need for local authorities, we may be able to simplify the number of items that we take into account in assessment and simplify the numbers associated with those items that we take into account. I hope, too, that we make a presentation of the whole system of finance that is understandable to Members of Parliament—it should be, but it is not—to local councillors and, perhaps most important of all, to the electorate. If I showed these documents to a member of the electorate, he would either laugh or cry, because he simply would not understand half the words.

I welcome the rate support grant settlement that has been made for Hertfordshire. I welcome the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government paid attention, as they said they would, to the representations that were made by councillors, Members of Parliament and others. I urge the Government to give careful consideration to the rate support grant position in the interim years before the next Conservative Government change to the new system, so that counties such as Hertfordshire are not disadvantaged. I urge, yet again, that in the new system that we introduce the rate support grant mechanism is made simple and clear to all.

6.7 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): We have come to this debate after eight years during which the Tory Government have launched a bitter and sustained attack on local democracy. We have seen the Government abolish metropolitan county councils, cancel elections and manipulate local government finance, with councillors disqualified and surcharged. In the absence of anything to say about the pressing social and economic problems in many parts of the country, the Government have taken refuge in making the most malicious and scurrilous attacks on many councillors — men and women who are desperately trying to serve their electorate and do something about the urgent social and economic needs that they see around them.

In Bradford, the Government and their policy, which is centralised to a breathtaking extent, have robbed us of £70 million over the past seven years. This is despite the Government's measure of need, saying that Bradford needs to spend this money to provide services for its growing population. The Secretary of State makes considerable efforts to establish the spending needs of all local authorities, the grant-related expenditure assessment, to provide a basis for supporting rate support grant.

Those spending needs — GREs — are determined in accordance with criteria applicable to all local authorities according to the statutory functions for which they are responsible. The rate support grant is then calculated by relating those needs to a local authority's rateable value.

In the past, multipliers have been used by the Secretary of State to limit the amount of rate support grant payable by reference to other criteria. Thankfully, the Secretary of State has abandoned the grossly unfair system of expenditure guidance controls. However, the use of the multipliers still enables the Secretary of State to fiddle the figures in an even more unfair way. Because rate support grant is related to GRE and rateable values, the amount of grant can be affected by increases or decreases in GREs which reflect increases and decreases in a local authority's needs and increases or decreases in a local authority's rateable value.

The Secretary of State is using the multiplier under the power available to him under section 59 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, as amended, to limit any reductions in the amount of rate support grant to certain authorities for 1987-88, compared to the grant payable in the current financial year. In effect, the Secretary of State is subsidising those authorities which

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have either decreasing needs or increasing rateable values. In practical terms, those local authorities are getting more rate support grant than they necessarily need in relation to their GREs and rateable values.

The Secretary of State has belatedly decided to apply a multiplier to limit the increased grant for 1987-88, compared to the current financial year, due to those authorities with substantial increased needs or substantially decreased rateable values. Substantial decreases in rateable values do not happen and, in effect, the multiplier affects only those authorities with major increased needs. However, the multiplier penalises those authorities, in that they do not get the grant to which their GREs would otherwise entitle them.

The operation of the two multipliers is fundamentally different in effect. In the first case, the multiplier provides an extra subsidy for those authorities which, if the Secretary of State firmly applied his needs criteria, would not otherwise get it by reference to their GREAs. In the second case, it is a penalty, penalising those authorities which clearly need the grant, having regard to their needs criteria fixed by the Secretary of State. The overall effect is to deny an element of grant needed by the poor authorities to provide a more comfortable cushion for those authorities which, on the Secretary of State's own criteria, already get their full grant entitlement. It is a classic case of robbing the poor to pay the rich.

Mr. Wood *rose*——

Mr. Madden: I would prefer to continue, particularly as the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) made a long contribution. I must say, my contribution is not going to be brief.

How can the Secretary of State, committed to a platform of relating rate support grant to local authority needs, justify providing some local authorities with additional grant when they are already getting their full grant entitlement in relation to their needs, and, at the same time, take grants from other authorities so that they do not even get their entitlement in relation to their needs? The true answer is that the Secretary of State was leaned upon by those councils losing grant by reason of decreasing needs or increasing rateable values, their representations being supported by their respective Tory Members of Parliament concerned about their seats and electoral prospects.

Therefore, between October 1986 and December 1986, the Secretary of State changed his mind. He drew back from the fair principle of giving rate support grant where it is needed. Instead, he compounded the felony of his predecessors by manipulating the system for political ends. Why did the Secretary of State change his mind?

Mr. Wood *rose*——

Mr. Madden: It is no coincidence that the authorities suffering grant reductions under his October 1986 proposals were Tory marginals. Bradford, Birmingham and a few other authorities with pressing increased needs had grant taken away from them to enable those frightened Tory marginals — Surrey, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Oxfordshire — to get bonus grant, presumably in the hope of buying Tory votes.

In the October 1986 proposals, the Secretary of State identified for Bradford £146·2 million of block grant—for spending at settlement expenditure assumption. In the December and January proposals, that figure is reduced to £138·4 million, taking into account an adjustment of the council's GRE. Some £10 million potential grant was taken away from Bradford, despite the clearly identified needs of Bradford, to pay for the Secretary of State's extra cushioning to the wealthy southern counties. The Secretary of State teasingly waved that £10 million grant in front of Bradford, recognising Bradford's needs, then took it away. That joke on Bradford is compounded in its bad taste by the money being given publicly to wealthy southern authorities.

There is a legal argument to suggest that that manipulation of grant is a misuse of the Secretary of State's powers. Furthermore, the Secretary of State is departing from the long-established principles of his Department, of treating all local authorities even-handedly. It is not surprising that the Secretary of State is anxious to obtain legislation preventing challenge of his decisions before the courts. What was once a carefully devised system of allocating central Government money to local authorities in an even-handed way has now become a means of the Secretary of State manipulating grants to get votes.

Is the Secretary of State aware that, in applying the multiplier-limiting rate support grant increases, he is forcing the affected councils either to fail to perform their statutory functions to meet the demands on those functions—which demands are clearly recognised by the Secretary of State in his own grant-related expenditure assessments — or to impose a greater burden on ratepayers than other authorities to enable those needs to be met? How can the Secretary of State demonstrate that this is an even-handed support grant distribution, when such inequities are fundamentally apparent? Will the Secretary of State give any assurance that these artificial manipulations will not be used in future years?

Will the Secretary of State not come clean and state publicly that what he really wants to achieve by his successive changes in the legislation is absolute and unchallengable arbitrary control to determine, in whatever way he wishes, in his absolute discretion, what amounts of rate support grant should be given to each local authority, without reference to any principles or criteria applicable to all local authorities.

I have referred to the fact that in the past seven years Bradford has been robbed of £70 million. The situation in our city is desperate. During the period 1980 to 1986, Bradford's total rateable value has increased from £42·9 million to nearly £46 million. However, that figure hides the fact that, during that period, the rateable value of industrial undertakings has fallen from £6·1 million to £5·7 million. If the rateable value from those properties had still been at the 1980 level of £6·1 million, Bradford would be receiving £900,000 more in rates income in 1987-88 than it will be receiving. That means that £900,000 extra block grant will be going to Bradford which, if the industrial base had been maintained, could have been redistributed among all the authorities.

Since 1980 Bradford has lost £3 million in rates income from a number of major industrial concerns. Salts (Saltaire) Ltd. was empty from 1 April 1986. Its rateable value was £76,000. International Harvesters is now demolished and that had a rateable value of £75,000. GEC is part-demolished and its rateable value was reduced by £48,000. Crofts Gear Works is part-demolished and its

rateable value was reduced by £44,000. Bulmer and Lumb is part empty and its rateable value was reduced by £48,000. Alston Works is now demolished and its rateable value was £40,000.

That shows the contraction of our industrial base, which has put between 30,000 and 35,000 men and women on the dole. The £70 million of which we have been robbed during the past few years has paid for tax cuts for the rich. The Government have done that again in their latest Budget, which is an insult to those who are unemployed and to the problems in our city.

The alternative that the Government now dangle before us in the form of a poll tax—or, in their terms, the so-called community charge—presents prospects that are far from happy for my constituents and for the other citizens of Bradford. This week, the Minister for Local Government let the cat out of the bag. He issued information showing the effect of the poll tax on Bradford. He stated:

"For the average two-adult household in Bradford, the community charge is likely to be about 20 per cent. higher than existing rates bills. Even so, on the basis of 1986-87 spending, the community charge would be less than £200—below the national average. The increase largely reflects the fact that domestic rateable values are so low at present. This means that Bradford ratepayers have been paying less than those elsewhere for the same level of service."

On non-domestic rates, the Minister said:

"Businesses in Bradford will gain considerably from the introduction of a national rate. On 1986-87 figures, there would be a reduction in poundages of over 20 per cent. . . . In total, non-domestic rate payers will save around £15 million a year in Bradford and nearly £60 million in West Yorkshire as a whole. That is very good news for existing businesses and for anyone thinking of setting up business in the area."

Once the Prime Minister gets word of that candid admission from the Minister, and once Mr. Ingham is alerted to the fact that those interesting revelations have been made, I fear for the hon. Gentleman's future because he might find himself back in Northern Ireland. His comments about the unfavourable impact that the poll tax will have on the citizens of Bradford — if the Government are given an opportunity to introduce it—will make extremely interesting reading for my constituents.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend has just informed the House that the Minister has stated that the poll tax would be about £200 per head in Bradford, and that that represents a 20 per cent. increase. As the average domestic rate bill in Bradford last year was only £251, does that not mean that the local tax bill for the average two-adult household is likely to rise from £251 to £400, which is far more than a 20 per cent. increase?

Mr. Madden: Yes, that is likely to be the case. I shall certainly be interested to hear any further comments about those revelations when my hon. Friend replies to the debate.

On Tuesday, there was an interesting article in *The Guardian*, headlined,

"Material to bridge the great divide: Christopher Haskins suggests ways to narrow the North-South gap".

In a most perceptive and persuasive article, Mr. Haskins who is the chairman of Northern Foods, called upon the Government to marshal their resources and priorities to lessen the gap between the north and the south. He said clearly that unless that was done, the position would deteriorate sharply and that the difficulties of allowing disadvantage and deprivation to continue to worsen in the north would cause acute economic and other difficulties for the south. That is absolutely right.

Mr. Haskins concluded his article by stating:

"London and the South-east continue to be a source of inflationary pressure in the economy as too many people pursue too few houses. If the pressure continues, industry in the South-east will suffer from higher and higher wage costs. But if the green belt is eased, to allow the building of more houses, the environment of the South will suffer. Either way, the South will become a less pleasant place to live.

There are many things we, as northern businesses, can do to help—by not moving our headquarters to London for a start—but only society, through government action, can radically change the position. And it must do so not so much out of altruism, but rather out of enlightened self-interest. It is in the South's interest that the North is a success."

I agree with that view. Since returning to the House in 1983, I have tried to do what I can to persuade the Government to act on an interdepartmental basis and to marshal the resources and priorities that are available to them to help my city and the others that are enduring the same plight.

Unlike those of the hon. Member for Stevenage, my appeals have met with a wholly negative and unhelpful response. Twice in the past 12 months, I have asked the Prime Minister to meet a deputation of representatives covering a wide spread of interest in Bradford. Those requests have been refused. I have also asked the Secretary of State for the Environment twice in the past 12 months to meet a deputation from Bradford to discuss our problems. Those requests also have been refused. The only meeting that I have had was with the Minister, who was good enough to meet a deputation from the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority, which wished to discuss the difficulties of deregulation and the precepts and grant allocations that it faced. We have not had even a dialogue with the deaf with this Government about the problems that we face in the north.

Mr. Chope: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the implementation of the national non-domestic rate would reduce the rates burden on businesses in Bradford by about 24 per cent.? Does he accept that that positive step by the Government will help the people of Bradford?

Mr. Madden: As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has suggested, a revaluation would have the same effect. However, that is an attempt to divert me from this argument.

I charge the Government with a deep uncaring complacency about the problems of the men, women and children in the north, who are desperately worried about their future and concerned also about the present. Tonight in Bradford, in 30,000 houses, people will go to bed in homes that need serious renovation. There are 8,000 people on the council housing waiting list and hundreds of families are homeless. Thousands of people who live in poor private accommodation are being harrassed and face great difficulties. However, only a few weeks ago we saw the payroll vote, in which Ministers were brought here in their limousines to vote down a measure that would have given some relief to tenants in multi-occupation.

I make no apology for another quotation. This time, I refer to a document recently published by my own council in Bradford, entitled "The Legacy: The Challenge—Poverty, Health and Disadvantage. A portrait of the Bradford District." In the foreword to that report, the leader of Bradford council, Councillor Phil Beeley, wrote:

[Mr. Madden]

"The legacy inherited by Bradford Council is one of worn out schools, bad housing and a growing sense of despair among the poor and the unemployed.

The challenge is to defeat this spiral of decline which has followed a chronic lack of investment, withdrawal of Government grants and massive rent and rate increases.

The council's new policy is to Put People First in deciding how and where the money is spent. To do this, we need to know and understand the needs of the people of the district and to work with communities to regenerate areas within the inner city and outer estates. This document shows in visual terms the way in which deprivation is concentrated in certain parts of the district and pin-points vulnerable groups such as the over 85's, single parent families and young children. We are extremely concerned about the increasing division between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and the way in which unemployment, poor housing and overcrowded, crumbling schools deprive young people of the chance to succeed in their lives.

We are not prepared to close our eyes to the needs of the district. We believe the Council has a responsibility to encourage local initiatives and motivate other institutions to invest in the district.

Bradford's single most valuable resource is its people, a multi-cultural population with a wide range of skills and aptitudes unique to the area. We shall seek to use these skills both to improve the prosperity of the district and to support and protect the vulnerable members of our community."

The Prime Minister may pay secret visits to Bradford and appear frightened to meet the people to discuss their anxieties and problems. Ministers may come to Bradford to drink our tea and give us sympathy, only to go away and do little about addressing the city's problems. We may be ignored, robbed of £70 million in seven years and denied grants to meet the urgent social and economic needs that all of us with a social conscience see around us.

I hope that the Minister will not only look at the words in the report but heed them, instead of attempting to slur men and women who are elected to serve their communities, to defend jobs and services, and to bring a better life to our people. I hope that he will consider the reality of our plight, because our electorates know the difficulties. They know that their only hope of a genuine improvement comes when this Government are pushed from office and a Labour Government are elected.

A Labour Government will work in partnership with local authorities to repair the damage which this Government have done to local democracy. We are committed to that, and I look forward to an early opportunity for that Labour Government to be elected.

6.31 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): In answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), the Prime Minister may have come to drink his tea, and he may have felt that my right hon. Friend did not meet many people from Bradford, but I assure him that the amount of notice for a visit by the Prime Minister is small, no matter which part of the country it is. Those of us who were in a hotel in Brighton three years ago understand why. Everywhere my right hon. Friend goes she risks her life and, accordingly, she is surrounded by strict security. It is most unfair of the hon. Gentleman to criticise my right hon. Friend on that basis.

I must shoot down the conspiracy theory that in some way Ministers at the Department of the Environment have manipulated the rate support grant to improve Conservative chances in their marginal seats in the south of England. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that there is a Conservative Member in Bradford, North whose seat some would regard as marginal. Moreover, I can remember when there was a Conservative Member for Bradford, West in the 1970s. He is now the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and he, too, may feel that his seat is marginal. It is absolute rubbish to suggest that there has been some conspiracy. That idea must be well and truly nailed to the floor by all Conservative Members.

We constantly face the suggestion that local authorities have been robbed of rate support grant. It is as if the financing of local government is wholly divorced from the rest of Government spending and falls into some safe little sacred corner where it cannot be touched by the Treasury's long-term planning. Prudent, sensible financing must be a theme of local and national Government. No Government can contemplate the years ahead and not see that they must place certain cash limits on public expenditure. Indeed, Labour Members have spent much time in recent weeks issuing policy documents about how they will spend money, presumably because they have costed their policy and thought about it. They should not expect us not to do the same.

Labour Members should not forget that in talking about robbing local authorities they are talking about the total amount of tax paid, whether through income tax, corporation tax or rates. Let us not forget that rates are a tax. They affect businesses and individuals in the community, as do more direct taxes. It is significant that businesses pay as much in rates as in corporation tax, so the effect of rates on employment prospects is fundamental and can never be forgotten.

It is worth commenting on the increase in rate support grant and local government expenditure, as planned by the Government, of £25·2 billion—an increase of 4·1 per cent. on 1986-87, which is in line with inflation, but it does not stop there. Exchequer grant to local authorities amounts to £12·842 billion, which is an increase of 9 per cent. and is nearly three times the rate of inflation. The list of local authority spending in the shire counties shows that the vast majority of local authorities are spending more, and well above the rate of inflation. They can increase their services because the Treasury agrees to their planned expenditure. On top of the £12·842 billion of Exchequer grant, £183 million has been given to help pay for teachers' salary increases.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West said that there was a divide between the north and south and that the north has come off worst. The figures show that £375 million extra has gone to the north, compared with £150 million to the south. In other words, the north has received more than twice as much as the south to deal with its problems in inner-city areas, high unemployment and the need to upgrade housing. The Government have tackled the so-called north-south divide realistically.

I represent the district of Lancashire, West which has a Conservative-controlled council. Its financial policies are prudent and this time it will increase rates by only 5 per cent. The people respect that. Over the past 18 months we have been able to attract to the district an additional 500 or 600 jobs. We could not have done that if we had charged exorbitant rates, because that would have deterred potential manufacturers or service industry business managers from coming to our area. New businesses are brought in because rates are low.

I cannot understand, and I am sure that many hon. Members will fail to understand, why it is necessary for local authorities in London which are newly under Labour control to increase their rates as they have done. Waltham Forest has increased its rates by 62 per cent. Hammersmith and Fulham by 50 per cent. and Ealing by 65 per cent. I note that my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) are present in the Chamber and no doubt they will be addressing us in full on the problems facing that authority. I cannot understand, and I am certain that my hon. Friends cannot understand, why it is necessary to raise the rates in that way, effectively increasing the money drawn in on the rates by more than 25 per cent. However, I do not have to go very far to find the answer to that.

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I shall give way in a moment.

I can find the answers to those problems in my constituency. When I reviewed the problems facing my constituency, I became aware of them. Having done that, I considered the plans of the local Labour party to deal with those problems. When those plans are costed, we find that the promises and plans will involve a rate increase next year of 150 per cent. in the district rates, irrespective of the consequences for local businesses or the fact that such a rise would drive away potential investors and so prevent the creation of new jobs. Many of those Labour-controlled local authorities never seem to understand that high rates and high unemployment go hand in hand.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Nonsense.

Mr. Hind: Potential business is driven out if the rates are raised to ridiculous levels.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman's figures about the local Labour party's plans are almost certainly moonshine.

Mr. Hind: Thanks very much. Is the hon. Gentleman accusing me of being a liar?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that word.

Mr. Hind: I withdraw the word "liar".

Mr. Straw: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has withdrawn that word, because I made no such accusation. I said that his figures were likely to be moonshine. As the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about increases in the local tax burden, how does he feel about the fact that the poll tax will result in a significant increase in the local tax burden on the local taxpayers of Lancashire, West?

Mr. Hind: I do not agree that there will be an increase on local taxpayers. I shall consider the poll tax in a moment. There may be increases in certain areas. However, the poll tax will be a much more equal spread of the cost of the services of local government. The changes that will come about in industrial and commercial rates in many inner-city areas that are desperately in need of new jobs and new investment will allow many businesses a tremendous degree of relief and so encourage them to invest, and will encourage new businesses to come in to tackle the problems of those communities.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is not listening to the points that I am making in response to his question, but every day I am approached by business people from Liverpool who say that they would like to set up businesses in Lancashire, West, in Ormskirk, or in Skelmersdale because they recognise that the rates charged there are much lower than in Liverpool and that there is a more sensible local authority upon which they can depend.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Chope: Does my hon. Friend recognise that the point made by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in relation to Lancashire, West is not correct? At the moment the average rate bill per adult in Lancashire, West is about £200. Under the community charge, the average charge per adult will be only £170. That represents about a 14 per cent. reduction.

Mr. Hind: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend for that and I am sure that the people of Lancashire, West will be extremely grateful for a 14 per cent. reduction in their——

Mr. Pike: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I have given way to the hon. Member for Blackburn once. He will have an opportunity to speak. I mean him no discourtesy, but other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Pike: Give way.

Mr. Hind: We must also look very carefully at some of the decisions made in the shire counties with regard to rates. If we take the average across the board, we see that the shire counties under Conservative control have increased rates by 6·5 per cent. and have been able to increase expenditure by a further 1·1 per cent. thereby increasing the standard of their services. That is well below the average when compared to the London Labour-controlled boroughs, and below the figures for shire counties controlled by Labour councils and for others such as Lancashire.

Lancashire is a good example to raise in this respect. The Conservatives in that authority proposed a budget, yet the Liberals and the Labour party combined to raise a rate higher than that which the Conservative group considered to be necessary to maintain proper services in the county. That is a good example of what is happening throughout the country.

I want to consider what has happened in Liverpool. That city is on the doorstep of my constituency and reveals some of the problems faced as a result of irresponsible financing in local authorities. Last week, Sir Trevor Jones, now the Liberal leader of the council, said that the Labour councillors who had been surcharged and removed from office had set a rate of 5 per cent. However, once they had assessed the money that was needed, they found that the rate increase should have been 30 per cent. Therefore, the rate levy was 25 per cent. short of what was needed.

Letters of intent were signed for contracts for which there was no money in the budget or in the bank. The Labour councillors left corporate debts of £800 million and, before they departed, their last-minute gesture was to increase that £800 million by spending a further £25 million on housing schemes, against the advice of the executives. That is Militant, some of the loony Left, at their worse in control of a big city. I admire the courage

[Mr. Hind]

shown by Sir Trevor Jones. He is trying to maintain the same level of housing by transferring it to co-operatives in order to build the same number of houses. Sir Trevor Jones has had to wrench back a school from a supermarket chain in order to increase parental choice and abolish Labour's rigid catchment area for schools.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) complains that the treatment of those Labour councillors in Liverpool was most unfair. However, he forgets that Parliament makes the law and that the law is to be obeyed. The way to change the law is through the ballot box, not by taking on the Government in direct clashes, as the Militant Labour councillors did in Liverpool in an attempt to get their way. They should not have risked 30,000 jobs by threatening to lay off staff. All that was highly irresponsible. The Labour councillors failed to recognise that the parliamentary mandate must always overrule that provided by the local electorate. That fact was ignored and, as a consequence, Liverpool's affairs were turned into a mess.

Liverpool is a typical example of high rates leading to unemployment problems and driving out businesses. Liverpool is probably one of the finest examples of how not to run an authority in order to attract jobs into the community.

Many Conservative Members cannot understand how certain authorities can find plenty of money to spend on anti-police propaganda, as Manchester did, of £500,000 for nuclear-free zones, as occurred in Manchester again, or for gay and lesbian units, police monitoring units, racial advisers, women's rights advisers, and so on. They all have their place, but those authorities complain about the lack of Government spending on local services. If local authorities are to act responsibly, it is no good their complaining to us about the housing budget or the social services budget when £500,000 of ratepayers' money can be found to build a nuclear-free zone in Manchester. That will not wash.

Mr. Pike: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hind: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an adequate chance to speak.

We must all recognise that prudent, sensible financing must be an important part of central Government and local government financing. It is no good imposing it on national Government and letting local government have a runaway free ride as to how it should spend its money. That is why I shall happily vote for these reports and give them my full support.

6.50 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I come directly to the point on which the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) closed his speech — the attempt to blame democratically elected local councillors and councils for all the ills that prevail in general finance, local or national. The facts need to be stated bluntly. Over the past five or six years, central Government expenditure has increased substantially more than public expenditure by local authorities. On 31 March 1986, I asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer:

"what has been the increase in central Government's current spending in each year since 1980; and what are the corresponding figures for local government."

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury replied:

"Between 1980-81 and 1984-85 central Government current spending rose by 46·3 per cent. and local authority current spending relevant for RSG by 37·5 per cent." — [*Official Report*, 13 March 1986; Vol. 93, c. 584.]

Central Government expenditure has increased substantially more than local government expenditure.

The Chief Secretary excused the increased expenditure by central Government on the grounds that there are considerably more unemployed now. Of course, we are spending £20 billion a year on dole money. Whose responsibility is that? That crass waste of public expenditure is central Government's responsibility. It has nothing to do with Liverpool or the so-called loonies of the Left. The loonies are in central Government. There is no better example of that than in the documents that we are debating. I agree that these documents are completely incomprehensible. The rate support grant report on England cost £6. Anyone who pays £6 for it is an idiot, because no one understands it. I do not understand it, nor do other hon. Members, Ministers or anyone else.

I shall quote some of the indicators that the Government used to decide how much help to give local councils. It is unbelievable. I shall read direct from page 51 of the wretched document where an adjustment is made for road maintenance.

"The sum in the area of the authority of Indicators B5a, B6, B7a and B8 as defined above, multiplied by the sum of the following"——

I hope that you are following this, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

"(i) the annual average number of days of snow-lying during 1979/80 to 1982/83 as estimated by the Secretary of State for Transport, multiplied by 9·60745"——

is that clear to everyone?—

"(ii) the annual average number of days of air frost during 1979/80 to 1982/83 as estimated by the Secretary of State for Transport, multiplied by 1·14303."

Crystal clear.

On page 50 provision is made for road maintenance for which local authorities are responsible. I shall quote paragraph B9 at length to let people understand the idiocy perpetrated by the Government on local authorities. The report says:

"*B9. Usage adjustment factor for road maintenance.* The sum in the area of the authority of (i) and (ii) below:—

(i) Indicator B5a as defined above, multiplied by 1·0;

(ii) Indicator B7a as defined above, multiplied by 0·3283"——

everyone is following this—

"multiplied by the sum of the following:—

(iii) −1209·35;

(iv) Indicator A1 divided by the sum of Indicators B5a, B6, B7a and B8 as defined above, multiplied by 9·91626".

Hon. Members are doing their sums; they have the calculators out. Sub-paragraph (v) is a beauty:

"annual average vehicle kilometres on principal roads in built-up areas excluding principal motorways during 1982 and 1983 divided by the length (in kilometres) of principal roads which are subject to a speed restriction not exceeding 40 miles per hour and of principal motorways in the area of that authority as at 1 April 1984, but excluding any such roads or motorways responsibility for which passed to the Secretary of State for Transport from 1 April 1986, all as estimated by the Secretary of State for Transport, multiplied by 0·0007899357".

That is the type of rubbish produced by civil servants and the Government to determine how much local authorities should get in rate support grant.

Mr. Clelland: Is my hon. Friend aware that what he has just read out results from this Government's legislation which, in their words, was intended to simplify and clarify the system?

Mr. Hamilton: Hon. Members understand that, but the poor councillors—those Left loonies—do not. If they are not loony now, they will be when they try to sort out this rubbish produced by the Government at £6 a time.

I did not intend to take part in this debate, but then I read some of these figures and happened to receive a reply from the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope)—who is sitting there bemused by the figures produced by his Department. He cannot understand them. He cannot tell me how that figure of 0·000 and seven other digits has been arrived at. I should like him to say who produced that figure — and give him the sack immediately—and then say why it should be that figure and not one millionth of a per cent. less or more.

In response to popular request, down in Devon, I asked the Minister today whether he would publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of rate support grant paid to each district council in Devon in each of the past five years. As the House knows, I shall be the new Member of Parliament for one of the Devon seats after the general election. I see that I am the only hon. Member in the Chamber representing Devon: I do not see a single Tory, Liberal or SDP Member defending local authorities in that county. Therefore, it is my responsibility to defend their interests, and I shall now proceed to do so.

The Minister gave me the figures, and I now wish to put on record certain facts about them. They show that in 1982-83 the rate support grant for South Hams—a constituency that I shall be representing in due course—was £2·745 million. In 1986-87, it is £2·857 million. That is an increase of £112,000 in four years. Assuming that the rate of inflation was only 3 per cent. in each of those four years, that should have meant a 12 per cent. overall increase; and 12 per cent. of the original figure of £2,745,000 in 1982-83 would have meant that South Hams needed £329,400 just to stand still. However, the increase in cash terms, as suggested by the Minister's own figures, is £112,000. Therefore, there has been a cut in actual cash terms of at least £217,000.

Devon is a very pretty county; that is why I am going there. However, the natural beauty of that county hides considerable deprivation in housing, education, health, transport and, not least, employment. All those services are bound to be adversely affected by what is shown in the Minister's figures.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, particularly for his elucidation of the way in which road maintenance grant-related expenditure assessment is calculated. Does he agree that the poll tax is even worse news for the people of South Hams? At present, the average rates bill in South Hams is about £260, while the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy estimates that the poll tax will be about £160 per head. That means that the bill for an average two-adult household will go up from £260 to at least £320, an increase of £60 per family.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall make sure that those facts get down to Devon. I am defending as best I can the rights and interests of the people of Devon, which are being repeatedly neglected by Devon Tory Members, none of whom is present and none of whom is taking any interest in these matters. They must know the adverse effects of the poll tax on the people of Devon who are struggling away under the incomprehensible system.

Mr. Chope: Will the hon. Gentleman take back to his constituency in west Fife the correct figures for the community charge exemplification in respect of South Hams? At present, the average rate bill per adult in South Hams is £176; in other words, a two-person household is paying about £350 in rates. However, following the implementation of the community charge, that same household would receive a 15 per cent. reduction and pay less than £300. The figures given by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) were not a true representation of what would happen then.

Mr. Hamilton: The last thing that I would do would be to accept statistics from any member of the Government. For a start, the Minister has got my constituency wrong; west Fife does not exist as a constituency. Apart from that, I would accept the figures given by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) very much sooner than I would accept those given by the Minister.

The Minister and the Government must know that the imposition of a poll tax runs against every royal commission and every authority that has examined the problem over the years. The Government are introducing the tax because they are running scared. They did the same in Scotland when we had the revaluation a year or two ago. The Tory party in Scotland will be damn lucky if it wins 10 parliamentary seats out of 70-odd in the next election, partly as a consequence of the poll tax. I suspect that when the electors in England know its implications, and realise how much it will benefit the rich rather than the poor, they will also rebel against it.

I have said enough to show how local government finance—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) is well able to make a long speech off his own bat. He still has the opportunity to do so, as we have three hours to go.

I am sure that local government electors understand that, as a direct consequence of the Government's meddling, local government finance is in the most unholy mess that we have seen since we first had elected local councils. This is a further and, I hope, final example of the colossal mess that we are now in.

7.8 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I do not quite understand why the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) made such an impassioned speech about the impact of the rate support grant on South Hams. I am sure that his constituents will be most upset to learn that he is deserting them for South Hams because it is such a delightful area. I do not know Fife very well, but it seems a very attractive area. I wonder what the hon. Gentleman's local newspaper will say about that part of his speech when it is reported, later this week.

I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question. The figures that he quoted will actually bring relief to the north. They show that where there is snow a local authority must spend more because it has to clear the roads. Something in the rate support grant must reflect that additional responsibility. Likewise, the reason why

[Sir George Young]

temperature is mentioned in the figures is that the colder it is, the more damage is done to the road surface. That too must be reflected in the formula. The more roads there are, the more expenditure there must be.

While we all enjoyed the hon. Gentleman's speech about the complicated formula, I hope that he will not say that he does not defend the principle behind it. The exemplifications that he mentioned will bring greater relief to the north than to the south.

It makes sense to debate the rate support grant settlement just two days after debating the Budget. In the same week, we are debating the two major impacts on the pockets of our people. On Monday we debated the Budget and national taxation; today we are debating rates and local taxation, and of course the two interact.

On Monday Opposition Members voted unanimously against the reduction of some £3 a week in income tax, and we heard their reasons. In Ealing the rates are going up by £4 a week for council house tenants and by £5 a week for home owners. Without the £3 a week reduction announced on Monday, the sums would not have begun to add up.

Ratepayers in Ealing have got the message that if by any chance we had lost the vote on Monday, not only would their rates have gone up quite a lot, but they would not have had the reduction in national taxation with which to pay for that. Businesses in Ealing, which have been hard hit by the business rate, are looking forward to the reduction in interest rates that has been made possible by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget.

Likewise, an integral part of the rate support grant settlement has been rate capping. The only party that believes in rate capping is the Conservative party. The alliance and the Labour party will abolish the rate-capping legislation. In areas with high-spending councils such as Ealing, which covers my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), and where there will be no local elections for another three years, the only protection that ratepayers will have in those three years will be from a Conservative Government committed to rate-capping legislation.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does my hon. Friend agree that that situation applies also to Newcastle city, which has had large rate increases over the past three years? Rate capping has saved the situation from the point of view of the ratepayers there. Does my hon. Friend further agree that the proposed community charge will make a distinct improvement for the majority of ratepayers in Newcastle or in my constituency, who will see their present high rate bills reduced to a much more manageable level?

Sir George Young: I welcome what my hon. Friend has said. No doubt over the next few months he will put forward those arguments with his customary vigour.

I refer to the settlement that we are debating. I welcome what has been known as the adjustment for realism. For many years there were two sets of figures—the Treasury books, with a figure which the Treasury thought local authorities should spend, and another figure, which was what local authorities actually spent. This led to enormous complications when the annual public expenditure debate took place. It took place on two separate sets of accounts. This year we have put that right with the adjustment for realism, and I very much welcome that step forward.

I also welcome the end of recycling, which comes into effect on 1 April. It is essential for local authorities, when they fix their rates and budgets, to know exactly how much grant they will get. I understand the principle of recycling, but it made it impossible to forecast with any accuracy how much money would be received in the municipal year. So I welcome that innovation as well.

I should like to raise a specific point about Ealing. As we heard earlier, at the moment we have an industrial dispute in Ealing, which has an impact on the distribution of expenditure as between this year and next year. For example, no bills are being paid. Businesses that are owed money by Ealing council are not getting paid. Inevitably, there is an accumulation of work on the housing stock and other parts of the estate. Normally that expenditure would have fallen in this year. It will now be pushed forward to next year. Expenditure, already planned to increase by a substantial amount, will be higher still. Can my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary say what the impact will be on the rate support grant settlement the year after that, or is it somehow swept up in the supplementary grants?

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North has already mentioned the hardship that is being caused by the dispute. A woman rang me this morning to say that she is to lose her job because the day centre to which she takes her child has been closed for 10 days and her employer is no longer prepared to put up with her absence. Someone who attends an adult training centre was to go on holiday last Friday, but needed his £8 pocket money to pay for his weekend. The ATC was closed, and he asked what he should do.

In Ealing we are threatened with the highest rate increase in the country—about 65 per cent. We have a virtual absence of any services because of the industrial dispute. It has blown out of the water in a short time the argument that the Labour party gets on with the trade unions. For eight years we had a Conservative administration at Ealing town hall and we never had such a dispute with the National and Local Government Officers Association, yet within a relatively few months of the Labour party being elected we have an all-out strike by NALGO, with the problems to which my hon. Friend the member for Ealing, North and I have drawn attention.

I return to the impact of the rate support grant on Ealing. It is always easy to blame someone else for one's problems. There has been a repetition of that from Opposition Members, who have blamed the Government's rate support grant settlement for the problems in their constituencies. We have heard emotive phrases, such as "being robbed" of £50 million, and so on. As I said, it is always easy to blame someone else rather than oneself.

I refer to the settlement for Ealing. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North and I will always argue for more money if it is around, but we must accept that if the council had budgeted to spend in line with inflation, having made allowance for the extra money needed to settle the teachers' pay dispute, Ealing's local rate need not have risen if the balances available from the London residuary body had been taken into account. In the debate on Ealing on 13 March my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government made that clear when he said:

> "In fact, overall, Ealing's local rate need not have risen at all if the extra balances had been used in such a way."—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 670.]

Instead, we are faced with a 65 per cent. rate increase because some rather extravagant decisions have been

taken. The only consolation is that at the moment we cannot pay our rates because the town hall is on strike and the post is not getting through, but, sadly, the day of reckoning will come.

We have problems in Ealing at the moment, caused not by the Conservative Government, but by the Left-wing Labour administration, which, sadly, we are saddled with for three years. We hope very much that the Government will announce later this summer that Ealing will be rate-capped.

7.16 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I welcome the opportunity to speak again on the subject of local government. After all that has been said over the past months and years, people may well wonder whether there is anything new to say about local government and local government finance. Had they listened to what the Secretary of State said in opening the debate, they would have definitely concluded that there was nothing new to say about the subject because he said nothing new, apart from the usual venom that he spits out, in his inimitable way, about Labour-controlled local authorities.

Today's announcement presents the opportunity to draw attention to what has happened as a result of the Government's complete ineptitude and bungling and fumbling over local government affairs. It is now well established that the Government have used the vehicle of legislation to attack Labour-controlled councils and at the same time to attempt to reward or avoid penalising councils under Conservative control — or at least that had been the Government's plan and intention. However, Labour councils are far more knowledgeable and expert in local government affairs than Ministers thought, and every attempt to punish people for voting Labour has been fought. Often the Government's plans have been frustrated or defeated.

This Government-inspired battle between local communities and Ministers has resulted in a record number of Acts, orders and announcements such as today's on local government matters. Such is the Government's ineptitude that not only has it resulted in successful court action being taken by individual councils, but it has sometimes meant, as in the Greenwich case, that Labour councils have gained at the expense of Conservative councils — the very opposite of what the Government intended. Such a chaotic farce would be hilarious were it not for the real harm that it does to local communities, regardless of how they vote in local elections.

Today's announcement comes not only four months late but after every local authority to which it applies has fixed its budget and its rate for the next financial year. It is the seventh announcement on the 1987-88 rate support grant and adds to the confusion and the future uncertainty, completely contrary to the Secretary of State's statement to the House on 22 July 1986, that his efforts would mean that local

"authorities will be able to plan their budgets and rates with much greater assurance" — [*Official Report*, 22 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 182.]

The Secretary of State is a great joker, although like many of his jokes, this one was neither funny nor practical.

Today's announcement follows the Government's consistent policy to cut the overall level of Exchequer grant to local authorities, with the result that, as a proportion of relevant expenditure, it has been reduced from 60 per cent. in 1981-82 to 46 per cent. in 1987-88. I have explained the formula before to the Minister, but in case he missed it last time, I shall explain it again.

For £100 of relevant expenditure in 1981, when the grant was running at 60 per cent., the local authority contribution from rates and charges was £40 to £60 from the Government, and £40 from local rates and charges. To spend the same £100 in 1987, with no increase in expenditure — no profligacy, no overspending, no loony Left-wing politics — the local contribution must be £54. If the Minister has his calculator, he can work it out. That amounts to a 35 per cent. increase in local contribution, and it is one of the major reasons for the rate increases of the past few years. Those are entirely the Government's responsibility, however much they may like to argue about it.

The chaos that has ensued has been evident in the latest episode of the long-running farce. For instance, Tyne and Wear fire and civil defence authority had met and set its rate precept before it received new figures from the Government that caused it to hold another meeting to fix a new rate based on the new figures.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne city council, which was mentioned earlier by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) — unfortunately, he has left the Chamber, but I hope that he will return before I have finished — had to make 160 amendments to its budget documents only hours before its rate-making meeting because of late announcements by the Government.

Gateshead councillors were faced with an amendment to the rates report on the day on which they sat to fix budgets for next year because of the Government's late announcements. And, as I have said, today's announcement comes after budget meetings have taken place.

The letters RSG — rate support grant — should stand for "Ridley's Silly Games"; that would be a more appropriate description of the way in which the Secretary of State has dealt with local government during his term office. Those silly games lead also to contradictions. The Government have acknowledged that special assistance is necessary for the inner cities, and in recognition of that, special area grants are made via the inner-city partnerships set up by the last Labour Government. To the credit of the present Government, they have been continued.

The inner-city areas of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead have received about £100 million in inner-city grant since the Government came to power. That may be thought generous and helpful to the inner cities of Gateshead and Newcastle, and of course they are grateful for it, but the same Government during the same period have caused a loss of more than £300 million in rate support grant for the same two local authorities. Where is the sense or logic in that? Nothing could be sillier, although Conservative Members apparently think that that is prudent and sensible.

Newcastle council spends wisely and effectively the money that it takes and, in private, many Ministers admit that. That is the expressed opinion of the *Daily Mail*, which could not, in any circumstances, be construed as a loony Left-wing publication.

Funding through partnership has been used more effectively than appears to be the case elsewhere. That is the opinion that is expressed in a report by the police staff college, following a visit by its representatives to Newcastle city council last year. I should add that, in the

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context of elections and the views of the electorate, Newcastle city councillors have to face the electorate every year, not every three years. Every year, the Labour party has been consistently supported by the people of Newcastle, despite what the hon. Member for Newcastle, Central said.

The Government are not finished yet. Their stated intention is to introduce a community charge and a uniform business rate to replace the rates and the Minister for Local Government has had something to say about that in the past day or two. I see that he has now returned to his place on the Treasury Bench. He did a great service to the nation when he made a comment that was reported in a press interview. He said—he will correct me if I am wrong, but I am sure that I am not—that people must pay for the way in which they vote. The Minister does not object, so I presume that those were his words.

According to the Minister's figures, however, the people of Newcastle and elsewhere will pay dearly if they vote Conservative in the next election. He has said that the introduction of the community charge will mean a 10 per cent. increase for the average ratepayer in Newcastle. Every household with two adults or more will pay more under the community charge if the Government are re-elected. The average rate in Newcastle, which is now about £500, will increase to about £600, according to figures that I have received today from the Department of the Environment—a bit later than the hon. Member for Newcastle, Central, but I managed to get them. It is a prospect that will not be welcomed, despite the fact that the hon. Member for Newcastle, Central thought that it would be welcomed by the people of Newcastle. I am sure that they will have something to say about that in the general election.

According to the Minister's figures, the uniform business rate will mean a 40 per cent. decrease in business rates in Newcastle. It would seem that the chairman of the Conservative party is asking businesses only for a loan when he appeals to them for money for the Conservative party election fund. He is not asking for grants or help, because if the Conservatives are re-elected, the businesses will be paid back their money at the expense of domestic ratepayers.

Mr. Chope: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that that is a travesty of the truth? Under the national non-domestic rate, the revenue from the business sector will be the same as it is now from business rates.

Mr. Clelland: The figures for Newcastle that I have state that businesses will be paying 40 per cent. less. If, as the Minister says, they will pay the same, I do not see how businesses will benefit from the uniform business rate.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman needs to have a better understanding of these matters. There will be a redistribution throughout the country as a result of bringing in the new domestic rate. That will mean that, in general, businesses in the north will benefit substantially. The hon. Gentleman should welcome that. Businesses elsewhere will have to pay a little more, but the Government believe that that is a price worth paying to attract businesses back to the north.

Mr. Clelland: If the Government think that that should be hailed as a boost for businesses in the area, they should give some evidence. In my view, the benefits to businesses in Newcastle depend entirely on the differences between the costs of setting up businesses in Newcastle, and those of setting up elsewhere, and on considerations such as the surrounding amenities—airports and road connections, for example.

Secondly, there is not one scrap of evidence that rates are a significant factor to be taken into account when businesses decide to settle in, or move from, a region.

In view of the Government's appalling record in local government matters, any statement or any change that promises to improve, enhance, simplify or clarify the system has to be considered with great scepticism. I believe that the Minister's statement that people must pay for the way in which they vote will ring in his ears: that is why they will not vote Conservative at the next election.

7.30 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I take issue with the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) when he says that there is no substantial difference between areas, because it is clear that jobs are being sucked out of my constituency into areas where there are development grants. For example, the Hoover factory has now effectively been removed from Perivale, where it was started in the 1930s, to Scotland and Wales. The attraction is redevelopment grants and rates. Any redistribution of the rating system which strongly favours the north, where it is much cheaper to set up, could have a very damaging effect upon industry in areas such as mine, and we shall have to watch that very carefully. I ask the hon. Gentleman to take that into account.

The rate support grant is particularly welcome because of the help that it gives to local authorities to meet the cost of the teachers' pay award and in many other ways. I particularly welcome it, apart from that, because in Ealing it would have had the effect, if the balances of the London residuary body and the former Greater London council had been properly applied, of giving us no rate increase at all, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) said. I want to expand on some of the things that he said and also to make my own comments on the situation in Ealing, as well as on the national situation.

No Member for Ealing could take part in this debate without reflecting the agonies of his constituents at the present time. Following a rate reduction of 4 per cent. last April by the outgoing Conservative council, my constituents now face an increase of 65 per cent. and a drop in local services at the same time. One cannot imagine a more appalling situation than to know that one will have to pay an extra £4 a week if one is a council tenant, and an extra £5 a week if one is in owner-occupied accommodation, that one cannot get repairs of any kind done, and that absolutely fundamental services, such as the provision of home helps even to elderly people of 96 or 98, are not available. That is the situation.

I had a telephone call this morning from a man of 98 who is attempting very courageously to live on his own. He has had home help service for some time, and needs it, but he is not getting it now, and his meals-on-wheels are packing up at weekends too. In addition to that, he is faced with an additional £5 a week on his rates. That is where one sees the Labour party as it is, and I was interested to hear Labour Members picking up the term "loony Left".

I hope that they will recognise that it is a very hard and evil Left and that Members will dissociate themselves from it.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington) *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak, I am sure.

I am deeply concerned about the disadvantaged and everybody else in my constituency because of the present situation. The National and Local Government Officers Association sent me a paper this morning which reads as follows:

"We regret the problems you are having at present due to the council workers' strike. Important services are either closed or seriously disrupted: Housing benefits, Homeless persons, Council housing officers; Schools and colleges; Social Services; Libraries and Sports Centres."

There are others, of course. It goes on:

"We are striking because of a long-term grievance over London cost-of-living allowances. Our members receive less than other Council workers in Ealing—the Teachers receive £1,215 and the Manual workers receive £1,020, whereas we get £738."

They were promised by the Ealing Labour party, the hard Left, that if it won the election last year that would be put right and NALGO workers would receive the same London weighting as teachers. Having gained control, however, it put the rates up by 65 per cent., started to throw money at everything imaginable, including homosexuals and lesbians, and made a determined drive to get the teaching of homosexuality as being as valid as heterosexuality on to the school curriculum. This is continuing in high schools but was repudiated by the chairman of the governors of a large church school in front of the Labour council which has perpetrated this evil policy, before an audience of 600 or 700 people and in the presence of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

The council has given £10,000 for peace parks and money for nuclear-free zones, provided special birthday cakes to celebrate the first anniversary of the women's committee, and all that sort of thing. The council having thrown money about like that, it was natural for the NALGO people to say that they were waiting for the council to honour its promise and pay the London weighting promised to them, but it has refused to do so.

That money could be paid today or tomorrow if the council would reallocate expenditure earmarked for political purposes, such as the huge payment to a firm to distribute political propaganda in the interests of the Labour council and the cost of the large number of staff taken on for that purpose. If all that were cancelled, the money could pay for the London weighting and the strike could end tomorrow and my constituents, including the elderly and many who are suffering grievously, would be able to return to normality, as they are entitled to do.

Who is all this hitting particularly? It is hitting people in sheltered accommodation. In one place the heating has been out of action for a month and there is no sign of its being repaired while the strike continues. Indeed, some old people have not had a bath for a month. So it goes on. The wardens are on strike. One lady told me that the milkman and the postman are not allowed to come in. That is the sort of thing that is happening, and it is the responsibility of the London borough of Ealing council, which has to settle the dispute, and could settle it.

The mother of a mentally disabled child came to see me the other day. She had managed to get a teacher whom she knew well to be with her child. Otherwise, she said, she could not have left the child even to do a little shopping. The child's school is closed because of the strike and it is easy to imagine the damage to the child, to the mother and to her whole family. That is the effect of the strike, and 30 or 40 schools are closed as a result of this situation.

Who has caused it and who is failing to sort it out? The answer is Ealing council.

Mr. Clelland *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman made his own speech, and I am not seeking to speak for a long time.

What is the situation for domestic ratepayers? Of course, it is all related to the RSG, which I mentioned at the beginning of my speech and which is fundamental to all that I am saying. The RSG for Ealing, with the balances that will be coming the way of the council shortly from the London residuary body and the former GLC, could have had the effect of no rate increase at all, but we have a 65 per cent. increase, and that is what makes people so incensed about the situation.

In industry the increase is 57·5 per cent., and of course this matters very much to people. The firm of Taylor Woodrow is to have a rate increase of £428,000. This means that it has to earn an extra £15 million. That will cost a great deal of effort and possibly jobs. It is a very enterprising firm and perhaps it will overcome the difficulties, but it is an unnecessary burden on the back of that great company.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: Lyons Companies have had a rate increase of £700,000, and that means that the price of tea, coffee, porridge and everything that they produce will have to go up or more people will have to be made redundant. Hon. Gentlemen say that high rates do not cost jobs. They had better come and see what is going on. Of course they cost jobs.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: I shall give way in a moment.

I shall give another example. A launderette owner wrote to me yesterday to say that his rates will go up by £8,000. This means that people from the nearby flats who use the launderette will have to pay much more. That is a direct increase in the cost of living of people who cannot afford it.

Ian Perryman runs a car repair firm and employs five people. His rates are to go up by £5,000. As a result, he will shortly have to get his five employees around the table to discuss the matter, and one of them will draw the short straw and be made redundant. High rates cost jobs, and I do not want to hear any more nonsense from the Labour party, the Liberals or anyone else to the effect that they do not.

Mr. Boyes: The hon. Gentleman says that increasing rates cost jobs. Does he agree, therefore, that if a local authority reduces its rates, employers should be able to create more jobs? I believe that the hon. Gentleman was a school teacher before he came to the House. Does he agree that since May 1986 Ealing has recruited 150 extra school teachers? Surely that is good for Ealing. It has reintroduced admissions to schools for the rising-fives.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman is making a speech.

Mr. Boyes: I am not. I am making a couple of points about education. The council has used rate increases to good effect, by creating a large number of jobs for teachers —at least 150.

Mr. Greenway: The figure is 140. I have no objection to more teachers, but that figure has to be looked at along with the 1,235 extra jobs at the Great Western centre next to Ealing town hall which has been acquired and which costs £3·1 million a year in rent. Those staff will need secretarial and research back-up, telephones and so on. Those are non-jobs, and some of them, I am told, are jobs for the boys — for the friends of the Labour party, including Labour councillors from other boroughs. It is no good Labour Members pretending that that does not happen or using the Leader of the Opposition's tactic of trying to pretend that the Labour party is respectable and decent, when it is corrupt, disgraceful and evil.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that the Leader of the Labour party and his right hon. and hon. Friends are corrupt?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I did not understand the hon. Gentleman to be referring to hon. Members of this House. If he was, he was, of course, out of order and must withdraw his comments.

Mr. Greenway: I referred, not to Members of this House, but to the Labour party.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member should let me hear the explanation of the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) first.

Mr. Greenway: I said that the Leader of the Labour party and others—it seems that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) is joining them — are attempting to cover up some of the worst behaviour. That is deplorable. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will stop trying to intervene and wait for his own turn to speak.

In addition to schools being closed and children, including disabled children——

Mr. Boyes: This is a disgraceful speech.

Mr. Greenway: Does the hon. Gentleman approve of disabled children being sent home for days on end and their families suffering? Does he approve of hospitals grinding slowly to a close because Ealing council cannot manage its staff and provide local services for discharged sick people in their homes? People cannot be discharged to their homes, which means that others cannot be taken into hospital because beds are taken up—all because of the council's inadequacy. Does the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington approve of that? What is his explanation to those who need serious hospital treatment and who face even more severe illness because they cannot get it?

What does the Labour party say to those looking forward to jobs in a computer company to be set up in Greenford, which I personally negotiated and which will provide 100 jobs, but which cannot be established because the strike is preventing committees from meeting to give the necessary planning consents? What does the Labour party say to that? It does not care, or it would do something about it and those jobs would be saved.

Mr. Boyes: Rubbish.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman had better find out the facts for himself. He does not know what he is talking about.

The GLC forced so-called improvements costing £1·5 million on the Ault and Wiborg paint factory, which found itself struggling to meet the cost.

Mr. Clelland: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech, but I find it difficult to see what it has to do with the rate support grant — however regrettable the circumstances that he describes might be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I should explain to the hon. Gentleman and the House that it is customary for debates on the rate support grant to range pretty widely over local government finance, and that is what is happening.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Member for Tyne Bridge provides further evidence of the way in which the Labour party tries to gag those who speak the truth. It does not like it. It wants to conceal the truth.

I have given a number of examples of the way in which jobs are lost as a result of heavy rates. There are plenty before me today and I fear that I shall be faced with more. The evidence is there. Let me give one last example.

The Ault and Wiborg paint factory in Perivale in my constituency has always had difficulty meeting high rates — like everybody else. The money that goes on rates could be spent on research and development and in other areas. The Ault and Wiborg paint factory had forced upon it by the late GLC measures costing £1·5 million, which made it vulnerable to a takeover by the Berger paint company. It has therefore had to say no to a takeover by Manders, a paint company in Wolverhampton, because its offer falls about £1·25 million short of the price being offered by Berger.

The difference between the two takeovers is that under the Berger takeover all the jobs will go, whereas under the Manders takeover 300 jobs will be saved. I wrote to Ealing council saying, "You are interested in industry. Out of your largesse, will you put up the £1·25 million required to save the 300 real jobs?", but the council refused. For my constituents, that sums it up. The Labour party does not care. It would rather create 1,235 non-jobs than save 300 real jobs. It is a disgrace.

7.48 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I am glad that you have ruled, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we can range widely in rate support grant debates, but unfortunately my speech will stick to the rate support grant. Had I known, I could have managed four or five more pages.

I have listened with interest to some Conservative Members extolling the virtue of the rate support grant settlement and saying that it has been welcomed in their areas. Is it not a strange coincidence that most of the areas that seem to benefit from the rate support grant settlement seem to be under Conservative administration? Sheffield city council has not received adequate recompense for its needs. It is ranked 23rd out of 36 metropolitan district councils in terms of grant-related expenditure per head of population in 1987-88. The Minister has obviously heeded the words and warnings of some Conservative-controlled local authorities and delivered the goods, but that has

certainly not happened to Sheffield. Indeed, while our deputation was arguing the case with the Minister, the report was presented in its present form, and there seemed little point in continuing the discussions.

The Government appear to ignore the needs of areas, such as Sheffield, which have very high unemployment. Before hon. Members start shouting that that is because of the high rates, I assure them that I shall come to that point later. High unemployment has been caused by the decimation of the steel and engineering industries in that part of the country. Again, that has nothing to do with local authorities but a lot to do with the Government. This afternoon the Government said that nothing could be done to stop unfair trading in Japan, yet they are prepared to stop any so-called unfair practices in local authorities. If we really want to put our house in order for the sake of industry and jobs, we should be looking across the water, not to the high rates of local authorities.

Local authorities such as Sheffield have 40 per cent. youth unemployment. That applies not just to the poorer east end; I believe that there is 40 per cent. youth unemployment in the only Conservative constituency in Sheffield. It is affecting working-class and middle-class families alike. That has been going on since 1979, and perhaps slightly before, because of the deterioration in trade. Middle-aged craftsmen and craftswomen are now long-term unemployed. Such skilled workers will not be able to find jobs in their industries again in their lifetime. The Government have not taken such problems into account when working out Sheffield's rate support grant.

In order to offset some of the difficulties the city council has set up educational courses which, according to my latest information, are likely to be affected by the financial constraints placed upon the local authority. Those courses could be kept at the expense of something else, but there are so many pressures on local authorities in areas such as Sheffield that moves cannot be made without causing suffering to somebody.

Facilities have been provided for the young unemployed which have helped to maintain some contact between the younger and older generations, providing the young with some guidance in their idle hours waiting for employment. But those facilities, too, are faced with such financial constraints that some are likely to be closed or at least experience some slowing down of their activities.

The services provided for old-age pensioners are under threat, not by the loony Left, but because we no longer have the resources to provide them at the level that we wish. They certainly cannot be increased. That is despite the fact that Sheffield, as I understand it, has the highest number of elderly people of any equivalent local authority. Again, that seems to have no effect upon the city's rate support grant.

Despite everything that Sheffield city council has tried to do to help those in need and those caught by the misfortune of unemployment, the fact is that the heavy trades and industries are no longer needed, so the unemployed, school-leavers without jobs and the old-age pensioners who need proper accommodation have suffered. The council's attempts to help those people have been sabotaged by the Government, or the council has been penalised for doing its best in those areas.

I have spoken in almost every local government debate in the House since 1983 and I want to repeat what I have said on many occasions. When the Audit Commission investigated Sheffield's finances, it commended the city council on its efficiency and value for money. Yet that efficient service and the work force which administers it are now under threat. Despite Sheffield's high unemployment, there may be redundancies within the local authority itself if the financial squeeze continues.

The block grant system still incorporates a penalty, whereby authorities lose substantial amounts of grant for overspending—about 79p for every pound for Sheffield city council in 1987-88. The problem is made worse by the abolition of grant recycling which means that money which would usually have gone back to local authorities will now be returned to the Treasury. The Association of County Councils has calculated that about £400 million could be involved in 1987-88. As a result, the effective level of Government support for local authorities is likely to be considerably lower than that assumed in the statement.

The Government's assumption of local authorities' spending needs is even lower than their own spending plan and the insistence on the amount not allocated to GRE ensures that more authorities are likely to lose grant at a higher rate for spending above the threshold level. The significance of safety nets and grant caps in the determination of an individual authority's grant entitlement underlines the arbitrariness and unpredictability for the year-on-year changes in the block grant system.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Are the views that he is expressing at the moment his own or those of Sheffield city council's treasurer's department?

Mr. Michie: I am sorry that I gave way, because that is not a clever question. Of course I do not create all my own work. I have received some of the statistics from the city treasurer. I do not know what his political persuasion is, but he is a professional. I assume that the hon. Gentleman writes all his own speeches and makes all his own calculations, in which case I concede that he is a cleverer man than I am.

The settlement is the third version that has been produced in the past three months but even so it is not definitive. The Secretary of State revised his original firm intentions in February, and again in March, following the Greenwich court case. The Secretary of State's announcement that he intends to appeal against that decision means that even this version of the settlement cannot be taken as final. Therefore, it is once again a major source of uncertainty for authorities in determining their rate requirements in 1987-88. Those uncertainties will cause all sorts of further problems for local authorities.

Now, for the benefit of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle), who is no longer listening, what follows is my own speech; it is not written by anybody else.

It has been said by many Conservative Members, although not by the hon. Gentleman because he has not been here long, that rates are the main cause of high unemployment. That clearly does not follow. I can give many examples. I do not have to go to strike action in Ealing; I can give straightforward examples from Sheffield. The massive job losses in steel there had nothing to do with the rates, even though the British Steel Corporation said that if the rates were lower fewer jobs would have been lost. That is nonsense because at that time energy prices were rising far higher than rates. We also had to remind the BSC that it was so big that it

[Mr. Michie]

stretched over Sheffield and Rotherham, and Rotherham's rates were much lower. Therefore, it is nonsense to say that unemployment is a result of high rates.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I accept that high rates are not the sole cause of companies moving. However, if an industry was looking for somewhere to go, would it go to Derbyshire, where the rates next year will be 262p in the pound, the highest rated shire county in the country, or to Staffordshire, whose rates next year will be 198p in the pound? It would be most likely to go to the area where cheaper rates prevail. Although that is not the be-all and end-all, it is certainly an important on-cost to any industry.

Mr. Michie: I am glad to have given the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to make a speech. I would prefer to go to Derbyshire than anywhere in Staffordshire, but the hon. Gentleman is saying that no firm will set up in Derbyshire, which is not the case. Firms could go to Staffordshire because it is cheaper, but they do go to Derbyshire.

Despite all the hoo-hather about the rates, Sheffield has been successful in attracting new firms. Indeed, I went to the opening of one only last Friday morning. That firm had chosen to come to Sheffield from a lower-rated authority because of the services that are offered in Sheffield. We must get away from the idea that if everyone has low rates and receives low pay there will be full employment. If that is the case, I cannot understand why everybody is not working in the Third world—that is the logic of the argument. It is claimed that if workers are paid peanuts and there is no ground rent or rates, firms will spring up. That is not the case—firms spring up for reasons other than ongoing overheads. Firms that are attracted to lower-rated authorities may find that those who own the private land will put the rents up accordingly. Perhaps there should be a policy of rent capping as well as rate capping to prevent the exploitation of people and businesses.

Some areas, known as free enterprise zones, do not pay any rates, but I still see vacant signs in those areas. I do not see people knocking on the door saying, "For God's sake, let me go to that enterprise zone." There is an enterprise zone just across the border of my constituency, but Sheffield has attracted more firms than that enterprise zone.

New firms and the consequent new jobs also demand the necessary services. Firms need services such as roads to the factories, education for the workers' children, housing, recreation facilities, and so on. All those are among the services required by new firms and new jobs. Sheffield has done reasonably well to achieve those objectives. Unfortunately, because Sheffield is rate-capped, the possibility of that city providing those services in advance of a new factory development is difficult because of that financial constraint.

Rate capping and the rate support grant levels imposed on Sheffield have destroyed the progressive programmes of that local authority. They have been continuously barraged by financial constraint. The problem will not go away while we have a Government who will not listen to reason. I do not mind losing the argument with the Minister or anyone who has a different point of view, but I object to losing the argument because that individual or the Minister did not listen. I object to losing the argument to the Government on the basis of their political spite.

8.2 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The purpose of my contribution to this debate is to ask my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government if he will make certain that the rate support grant settlement that he has achieved this year is maintained in every succeeding year until he introduces the new system that will replace the present rate support system.

We owe a great debt to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Local Government for the way in which he has listened to the representations made to him this year. He has listened with more care and to a greater degree than any previous Minister for Local Government, and especially in relation to the difficulties faced by Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire district council within my constituency.

In answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie), thank goodness our Ministers have introduced rate capping. If they had not, there would be no rate support grant available for Hertfordshire, because counties and authorities such as Sheffield eat up all the money available in a finite rate support grant. Therefore, areas such as mine would receive nothing. The rate support grant system was introduced by the previous Labour Government and ever since we have suffered, year after year, reductions in the rate support grant. At present, it is a small percentage of the total amount of money that is spent in the county.

As a result of that declining amount of revenue, we have had to neglect the maintenance of our schools in order to maintain the staff-pupil ratio and the quality of education. We have had to neglect roads and highways, but at the same time we have been contributing a large amount to the redistribution system under the rate support grant settlement. That redistribution helps areas such as Sheffield and Ealing, but what thanks does the Minister get for that redistribution? He has met nothing but abuse and total intransigence. Local government under Labour control, rather than listening to central Government, has proved intransigent; such authorities have a great deal to answer for in the part they have played in breaking down the system of rating that the country previously enjoyed.

If such authorities continue to follow such a policy, successive Governments will need additional resources and additional legislation to curb the overspending behaviour of such authorities. Such behaviour shows that the authorities do not listen to the national needs of the country; their behaviour is exemplified by the attitude and chaos in many Labour councils.

I am aware that Ministers have increased the rate support grant settlement by 9 per cent. more than they did in 1986-87. I do not expect successive Governments continuously to increase the rate support grant in this manner, but I am asking the Minister to cap the rate support grant settlement at the present rate, in real terms, for the next three years until he introduces the new system.

The changes in the system of calculation are also extremely important and I shall explain that in terms of its effects on Hertfordshire. The rate support grant settlement for Hertfordshire has fallen this year—we have had no increase. Through redistribution, Hertfordshire has contributed to the council in Sheffield and the council in

Ealing. Hertfordshire faces a reduction in rate support grant, but because of the intervention of my hon. Friend the Minister it is less than was originally expected.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my hon. Friend agree that that almost gives the lie to some of the information that certain Labour authorities have issued? This morning, I received a rate explanation leaflet from my county of Derbyshire. That leaflet tries to point out that, in some way, all the money will go to councils such as my hon. Friend's, as a reward to those in the south. My hon. Friend should underline the fact that Derbyshire had been given an increase in rate support grant this year because expenditure is under control in areas such as my hon. Friend's. Derbyshire has the highest rate in the country and is suffering from the profligate spending of the Socialist authority.

Mr. Bowen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because he illustrates the way in which the people of Hertfordshire have been willing to play their part in trying to assist the poorer areas—the underprivileged and unemployed in other parts of the country such as inner-city areas in Sheffield or the poorer areas of Derbyshire. However, if the councils in those areas do not play their part to curb their expenditure, by focusing expenditure on real needs and running an efficient organisation, I believe that the people of Hertfordshire have good reason to feel extremely angry and poorly treated.

Hertfordshire has suffered a 6·4 per cent. reduction in the rate support grant settlement this year.

Mr. Michie *rose*——

Mr. Wells: No, the hon. Gentleman has had his opportunity and, as I hope that my remarks will prove, I listened to him with great care.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLouglin) is aware, the distribution of grant depends on what is described as the "need to spend". According to the extraordinary statistical system that has been developed in the Department of the Environment, Hertfordshire does not have a great needs element. That is why we continually lose the argument for getting a reasonable settlement under the rate support grant system.

Year after year I have got angry, frustrated and furious with Ministers, officials and statisticians of the Department in an attempt to change this absurd calculation, but to no avail. Because of my experience, I do not believe that we should change the calculation until we get the new system that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able to propose when we win the next election.

Rateable values in Hertfordshire are much higher than those in many parts of the country. That is the element on which statisticians have depended for their argument that the county has low needs. However, I have argued that Hertfordshire has a 35 per cent. higher than average rateable value, and that translates into low needs. But we have only 13 per cent. above the normal level of income. We are by no means as plush as other counties. We are only 13 per cent. above the national average, yet we are calculated to have 35 per cent. lower than average needs.

That is the basis on which the absurd calculation always makes a low settlement in favour of Hertfordshire. I should like the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) to take home to Sheffield the point that, of total county expenditure, only 7·8 per cent. is met from the rate support grant. The rest must be raised in Hertfordshire — from our constituents, workers and businesses. Indeed, that results in the county paying more in rates than almost any other county.

The county is accused by Opposition Members of being lush pastures that benefit from the Government's largesse. Indeed, the Government have been over-generous. They have ignored the abuse that has been heaped upon their heads, and have redistributed the grants. Nonetheless, they do not get much thanks for it. I do not think that they ever will be thanked. I have often pointed out that fact. Ministers have said that they need to redistribute the grant in favour of the needy. I should be delighted to make that transfer—most people in Hertfordshire will agree with me—if it went to that purpose. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) demonstrated, it certainly does not. To my certain knowledge, it does not go to that purpose in inner London, either. That makes us even more angry at the continuation of a system that is extremely unfair to my constituents.

As a result of the system, we have managed to raise our rates by only 7 per cent. The rate settlement is about 3 per cent. more than it should be, simply because Hertfordshire is now afflicted by an unholy alliance between Labour and alliance members of the county council, who are inexorably pushing for higher and higher expenditure. It is only by virtue of the efforts of Conservative county councillors that we have managed to keep the increase down to 7 per cent.

If the settlement had been made with no increase in expenditure, we could have kept the rate at 3 per cent. Because of the need to spend money after a long period of austerity and because the council had been losing rate support grant at a considerable rate, Conservative Members wanted to spend more money on maintaining our schools, some of which are in an appalling state, on increasing much-needed nursery school education, and on increasing the number of primary school teachers.

I do not exempt my county council from the need to be efficient. Although it may point, as the hon. Member for Heeley did, to the Audit Commission giving it one or two plaudits, I am convinced that there is a great deal more to be done within the county to increase efficiency and reduce costs in all areas. For example, the borough still has an exceedingly expensive school meals service. If that service were contracted out and conducted on a proper basis, it would result in our being able to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio still further—particularly in primary schools—and open more nursery schools, which are obviously needed. The county council has not tackled that matter. Indeed, there is continuous opposition from the Labour and alliance parties on the county council to prevent that kind of efficiency. We are criticised for proposing to contract out other services to save money.

A great deal of efficiency and rigour is needed if we are to run the county council efficiently as people deserve in the county and in the areas that need more money. I accept that more money is needed in inner-city areas. If we do not maintain the present system of distribution to which my hon. Friend has agreed, we shall have a horrendous rise in rates next year. Counties such as Hertfordshire will go out of the rate support grant system altogether.

Let us examine the way in which we have kept down rates in Hertfordshire this year. I should like the Minister to note that we have taken all our money out of reserves

[Mr. Wells]

to keep rates as low as we have been able to, and we have added to that money from our balances. If the system were to revert to what my hon. Friend originally proposed in July, it would mean that the county council will have no reserves or balances to put towards keeping the rate support grant down, and we will see extremely high rate increases next year. Therefore, it is essential, if we are to get any kind of justice or equity, to maintain the present distribution system, in spite of the blandishments of Opposition Members, which my hon. Friend has heard, to benefit themselves disproportionately and thus deprive my county council and its constituents from at least getting a fair amount—or even the 6·8 per cent. that we got this year—from the rate support grant settlement.

I despair of persuading statisticians and other people in the Department of the Environment to change their incredibly stupid method of calculating needs in the rate support grant settlement. The reason for higher rateable values in Hertfordshire is that, since 1945, the county has been substantially built over. Therefore, all our rates and valuations are up to date. Thus, Hertfordshire is depicted as a much richer county than it should be. I despair of getting the system altered. I beg my hon. Friend to keep the distribution system as it is for the next few years until he can introduce a new system. I ask him also to maintain the grant in real terms. If he does that, we shall have a predictable system in the next few years. It will give him fewer headaches because he will not have me buzzing around his ears and telling him that he is doing the wrong thing and that he is depriving my constituents. Other boroughs will be able to know what they are getting. That will be the best way to proceed.

8.18 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I apologise for not being in the House at the start of the debate. Unfortunately, I was on the Select Committee on the Environment, so was engaged elsewhere in the building. That is one of the unfortunate matters that afflict hon. Members from time to time.

The matters that we are debating are regrettably similar to issues with which we have dealt many times over the past few years. Unfortunately, as yet the Government have not been prepared to see common sense and change the direction of their policies. I agree with the Government on one point. A Government of whatever party have the right to set the maximum amount that they are prepared to put into local government.

The maximum amount that the Government are giving to local government is insufficient. Local government has the right to pursue that argument. If there is to be local democracy, local authorities should be able to raise from their ratepayers whatever amount they believe is needed and acceptable to meet the needs of the community.

The speech of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) showed that he has little interest in local government. He is very much against local government and local democracy. I regret that he is not in the Chamber now. However, I do believe in local government and local democracy. We should strengthen, not weaken, local government. Local government is weakened if we continue to tighten the capital and revenue constraints within which it has to work.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West referred to a number of rating problems, but in 1979 the Government contributed to the problems that we are facing now. They cancelled the rating revaluation. Rating revaluation might have had an effect that I should not have liked, but the Government have compounded the problems that now face local government because of their failure to implement the rating revaluation in 1979. However, even if there were to be a rating revaluation instead of the community charge, such a long time has passed since the last rating revaluation that a realistic revaluation would have an unacceptable impact on many areas.

Earlier this week the Minister for Local Government sent certain information to hon. Members. It has been extremely useful. It is far better that that information should have come from him rather than from me or from my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). His message is the same as the message that I have been giving to the people of north-east Lancashire ever since the Government proposed a move in this direction.

The Minister for Local Government said that because of the community charge a two-adult household in north-east Lancashire will probably have to pay substantially more than it now pays. He also said that this was because domestic rateable values in the area are among the lowest in the country. I believe that Pendle, the constituency that is adjacent to mine, has the lowest domestic rateable value in the country. The domestic rateable values of Burnley, Hyndburn, Rossendale, and Blackburn are very low, too.

The Minister then said that the people in those areas enjoy the benefit of far cheaper local authority services than can be enjoyed elsewhere. That is an amazing statement. This Government have consistently accused Burnley of being an overspender and a wasteful authority. When I was the leader of Burnley council, I disputed that statement with Department of the Environment Ministers.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) for interrupting him, but may I draw your attention to the total absence of members of the Social Democratic party and of the Liberal party on the Opposition Benches? Do you agree with me that it is deplorable——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be a point of argument, but it is certainly not a point of order.

Mr. Pike: The problem is largely caused by the low rateable values of residential properties. To be fair to the Minister for Local Government, he then said that on the basis of the 1986-87 figures the rate poundage for industry in Lancashire will be cut by between 5 and 12 per cent.

The people of north-east Lancashire will not welcome this increase. The present rating system creates difficulties. At a Labour party conference before the 1959 general election we considered what could be done, but despite the anomalies and the friction that the present system creates I cannot think of a system that would not create even greater problems, or just as many problems as the existing system.

I have studied the final supplementary report for 1985-86 but I have been unable to find in it the information that I seek, and I hope that the Minister will be able to enlighten me when he replies to the debate. I refer to the very high cost of policing the Conservative party conference at Blackpool. Lancashire county council

has pursued the matter with the Minister. Several of my hon. Friends and I have pursued it, and we were told that the matter would be dealt with in the final supplementary report. This is not a political issue. When the Labour party forms the next Government, I accept that the same security costs will be involved. However, we do not want Brighton and Blackpool to be penalised. Very few towns have the facilities that would enable them to accommodate Labour or Conservative party conferences. It is wrong that county ratepayers should have to meet such massive costs, following the Brighton bombing tragedy of 1985.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that after the next election virtually any city will be able to accommodate the Labour party conference?

Mr. Pike: I should have known better than to give way to the hon. Gentleman. Labour party conferences will always be far more democratic than Conservative party conferences, which are predetermined by the platform from day one.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does my hon. Friend agree that according to the latest opinion polls, 140 Conservative Members will lose their seats?

Mr. Pike: I am sure that many Conservative Members are sweating about the date of the next general election, because they know that they will lose their seats.

The point that I am making is important and I ask the Minister to respond to it. In annex IV of the report, the Minister gives the description of further expenditure to be disregarded under section 8 of the Local Government Finance Act. Item 9 shows that total expenditure incurred under the precept of mass demonstrations on Ministry of Defence sites in respect of which a special payment has been made is to be considered, and it goes on to explain why. I argue that if that is perfectly fair, where those establishments have been bought by the Government—I do not agree with the missiles being there, but that is not an issue for today — there is no great dissimilarity between that and a county having to contend with a conference of one of the major political parties.

I want to pursue yet again the question of the factor that is used to calculate GREA with regard to the figures that are allowed for art galleries and museums. The calculation that is used for this part of the grant is nonsense. It is based on the square footage of shops and restaurants in a local authority area. That means that a local authority which makes no provision for its citizens in those two respects, or the theatre or the arts, gets exactly the same grant as a council that is providing an excellent service. It is of significance to my local authority — which has a museum and art gallery and has opened a multi-purpose arts centre at the Mechanics in Burnley — because it is already on maximum grant, so the cost of that over the year, as it gets into full running, must be borne by the ratepayers of Burnley. I give that example, and I have given other examples over the years, but I do not intend to do so tonight because other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

If we have a system which is based on all those factors, with all the complexities that are explained in the report, it is crucial that the basis on which those figures are calculated is fair and reasonable; otherwise we cannot come forward with a fair solution. Although we have had this system in operation for all these years, we still do not have a system that deals with these points on a fair and equal basis for the local authorities involved.

Before I close I wish to give an illustration of the effect of the Government's policy on rates in Burnley by the grant that they have made and the figures for Pendle. In 1981-82, the Government grant was £5,435,000. In 1986-87, it is expected to be £5,112,000. We know that it will change with the final adjustment. It will be some time before the final figure is known. I asked the Minister to give me those figures.

In a written answer on 24 February the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), said that in 1981-82 prices, using the same basis all the way through, the grant for that year, would have been the same—£5,435,000—but in 1986-87, using the constant price basis, it had gone down to £3,997,000. In Pendle in 1981-82 the figure was £4,430,000, in both cash and real prices. Using the same basis, it had gone down in cash terms to £4,354,000 in 1986-87, and in comparative prices it had gone down to the equivalent of £3,405,000. That means that to stand still, councils have been forced to pass on a massive burden to local ratepayers. The Government must accept that a large percentage of the rate increases that have been forced on ratepayers have been a result of the Government's action and it is the Government's responsibility.

I omitted to mention one point with regard to the community charge when I was saying that people in my constituency will experience a substantial increase. It is also important to remember that ratepayers will be paying 20 per cent. of their rates—those on maximum housing benefit at the present time — and they will also be bearing that percentage of the community charge. Whatever adjustment is made in other forms of benefit, the areas that are bearing the worst as a result of the community charge will lose as a result of this move by the Government.

It is time that the Government changed direction and lived up to the promise that they made when they were first elected, to give freedom to local government, and to do that they need to give local government the cash resources, both capital and revenue, to get on with the job for which they were elected.

8.37 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) acknowledge that the Government should have the final word on total local government expenditure. There is no doubt that, ever since local government expenditure has been of a sufficient volume to affect the national economy, successive Governments have had to take a considerable interest in what local government is spending.

For many years, local government was allowed to put in a bid for whatever it considered necessary for its needs, and it was then told by the Government that it had to cut back by so many percentage points. Local government that was careful with its expenditure had considerable difficulty in doing that, much more so than those authorities that were free spenders. That is where matters started to go wrong.

The matter was compounded when some local authorities refused to accept the requests of central Government to trim their sails. They declined to do so on

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

the basis that there was no legal requirement for them to comply. Clearly no Government could accept that, because of the enormous total expenditure of local authorities in relation to total national expenditure. Local authority expenditure now has a significant effect on many matters, including interest rates and the availability of funds to spend elsewhere in the economy. Quite clearly the Government had to do something about it. That is how the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 came into being.

It is clear that throughout those many years before the Act was passed, local authorities were able to put their hands into the pockets of the Government, because Government subsidies were paid out as a proportion of total expenditure. If local authorities decided that they wanted to spend a larger amount, they could call on the Government to make a contribution to that sum. That meant that taxpayers up and down the country were paying over the odds to those authorities that had decided that they wished to spend widely. It ill becomes Opposition Members to make such a song and dance about their authorities being rate-capped and deprived of grants, when clearly local authorities had it so good for so long at the expense of everybody else. Local authorities did not draw anyone's attention to that at the time because they were only too happy to take those funds. Local authorities that are being trimmed back do not like it because they are being told that they must fall into line with everyone else.

I participated in the system that was introduced in 1980, because I was a member of the Standing Committee on that Bill. The Committee sat for quite a long time and we went into the matter in great detail. The complexities that have arisen still leave a lot to be desired. In order to have an effective tax we must have one that can be seen to be working properly, had one that can be seen to be fair in the way in which it distributes resources. Many areas are receiving rate supports grants that are so difficult to calculate that it is not easy even for quite skilled professional people, let alone the man in the street, to understand exactly what is happening. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to try to make it a lot simpler to understand so that people can see how fair and equitable it is. Clearly, that is not how it looks at present.

I hope that my hon. Friends will shortly turn their attention to creative accounting. This is creating enormous debts that are likely to be passed, without any valid excuse, to future generations. I trust that my hon. Friends are looking into the possibility of ensuring that some penalty falls upon the heads of those who indulge in this practice, which is quite unfair to succeeding generations.

I shall now turn to the community charge. I was rather alarmed to hear my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State say that one of the designs of national commercial rates is to transfer resources from the south to the north. That would not be right and it is one of the main drawbacks of the community charge. Whether we like it or not, local people become involved in commercial undertakings in their areas, especially in shopping and industrial properties.

Although it is intended that there should no longer be a locally assessed business rate, authorities that prudently trim their charges to attract shops and businesses to their areas must continue to be encouraged. I hope that a business rate element can therefore be retained to enable local authorities to reflect their desire to attract shops and industry by cutting rates so that additional employment is created. To take away such encouragement and deal with the matter only at national level would be unfortunate, and I shudder to think what it could lead to in the way of manipulation nationally. That would not be a good thing.

I am worried about restrictions on contractors. Many contracts are now awarded at much higher figures than those that are in the interests of the ratepayers and the localities. Some local authorities have taken it into their heads to restrict the number of firms that can tender for work. They do that by way of various political requirements. That is a severe handicap. I hope that my hon. Friends will try to ensure that any extra costs incurred by this kind of behaviour can quite properly be assigned to the councillors who decide that contracts should be awarded on that basis.

Ratepayers ought to benefit from the lowest estimates for work, and any extra charges that arise because the contractor who can give the lowest bid is excluded on political grounds should be a direct charge on councillors who impose political conditions. I hope that my hon. Friend will look into the possibility of surcharging councillors who indulge in this kind of political gerrymandering.

I marvel at the way in which Opposition Members appear completely to disregard the effect of rates upon industry and commerce. They declare that rates have no effect upon employment. That is quite extraordinary. My local authority area is the London borough of Redbridge.

Mr. Straw: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way.

Mr. Thorne: I am not a Minister.

Mr. Straw: I apologise for prematurely elevating the hon. Gentleman. I know no more than he knows about his future. The hon. Gentleman suggests that somehow we have manufactured our ideas about the relationship between rates and jobs. Our conclusions come directly from a £50,000 Department of the Environment study, which came to the same conclusion.

Mr. Thorne: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but the arguments advanced by the Opposition in this debate have been negative. They have tried to prove that because the steel industry was reduced in size, low rates had no effect upon saving jobs. That is an entirely false theory. We must study the effect of rates upon industry in a specific locality over a longer period than that during which an industry declines. That is where the hon. Gentleman is going wrong.

Residential ratepayers are flocking to my area from two adjoining areas—the London boroughs of Newham and Waltham Forest—because in those areas the rates on houses are more than double the rates on similar houses in my local authority area. People are so desperate to get into my local authority area that the prices of property in my constituency are going up considerably. That is a direct result of the rateable value differential. I must confess that that is not due only to rates, but partly because people with children are desperate to get away from the education programmes of those two local authorities. Both those authorities are in the hands of the far Left and people feel that that is doing their children a grave disservice.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the need to ensure that authorities that have taken the advice of Government

Departments and relied upon their reserves this year, are not disappointed in the future. They have taken the Government at their word, and I hope that they will be helped.

My main concern is the Greenwich factor. I know that this matter is now the subject of an appeal. When the judgment is given, my hon. Friends should be careful to ensure that local authority areas that have been adversely affected as a result of this factor are not penalised because of some miscalculation by a civil servant.

It is deplorable that this has happened and I hope that in due course the matter will be put right. I hope that it will be corrected by the judgment of the court. However, there are other ways in which it could be dealt with and in that context I draw my hon. Friend's attention to, section 66 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act 1963. I hope that he will explore that as a way of solving this problem through the rate equalisation scheme.

This has been an interesting debate, especially in view of the Opposition statement that they do not believe that high rates discourage business activity. I profoundly disagree with that assumption. High rates are a definite disincentive to the creation of employment. I am delighted that the Government will be rate-capping authorities to ensure that firms do not go out of business.

I notice that the Opposition are particularly concerned about the community charge, because it may have an effect on their election results. My hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), have had this matter illustrated to them extremely well in the past few months. The illustrations that they gave the House were extremely interesting. I know that the House will watch with great interest the election results of my Conservative colleagues in Ealing when the general election comes. The ballot box will show how much the electorate of Ealing disagree with the antics of the local Labour party.

8.50 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I shall pick up one or two of the points made by the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) about industry and rates. It seems common sense to say that areas with low rates will attract industry, but that is too simplistic, as is shown by what has happened in my area.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) said much the same thing as the hon. Member for Ilford, South. He praised his local authority for having kept to a rates increase of just over 5 per cent., and said that this would encourage industry to go to his area. That is fine, except that my authority has had a rate increase of 4·5 per cent. The average rate in west Lancashire is £331·27, but the average rate in Barnsley is £269·88. Therefore, not only have we had a lower rate increase, but we had a lower average rate to start with. However, we still have an unemployment rate of 22 per cent. How does one correlate the Conservative party's arguments about rates with that point?

My district looked at its infrastructure because we said that if we have people available for work—it is an excellent work force—a chamber of trade and a local authority that co-operate extremely well and a network of transport north, south, east and west, by every capitalist way of thinking, industry should be flocking to our area. But it is not, and we do not know why.

Other factors must also be taken into consideration. There are problems. We have always had the argument about rates and services. The Secretary of State talked about value for money, but I hope that he does not think that cutting services is value for money: it is not. The people I represent are a canny lot when it comes to value for money. They do not look at the amount of rates but ask what are they getting for that expenditure.

I can illustrate this point. When my small urban authority decided to build a swimming bath, it had to increase the rates, but the people decided whether they should have that facility. The local authority had public meetings to inform people that if they wanted the facility they would have to pay for it. They said that they did not mind paying, provided that they got value for money. The project proved to be worth while. The Secretary of State says that value for money is a cut in services, but that is not true, because people want services. Services vary from area to area, so one cannot take one area as a norm.

In my constituency, the formula works against the local authority because of its problems and the need to increase rates to overcome those problems. When the Government decided to cut the rate support grant to local authorities, this put the local authorities in the invidious position of having either to cut the services that people wanted or to increase the rates.

When the Government found out that their ploy was not working, they had to introduce rate capping. The council is making its fifth or sixth attempt to bring in a rate, and this is playing havoc with the way that it is trying to come to terms with rate grants. It is continually in the terrible position of making a rate and of having to make it again and again. The responsibility for that folly falls clearly on the shoulders of the Secretary of State.

All this is about the removal of powers from local to central Government because central Government think that they know best when they do not. Ours is the central authority, and the Government are too far from the people concerned to make the decisions that they are making. I will continue to say that it is for central Government to determine what grant is sufficient. However, it is not the prerogative of central Government to take on the role of local government and decide what services should be provided. That is the power of people in local government and it is for the electors to decide what services they want from their local authority and what electoral system they should have to bring councils to power. That has nothing to do with us and the more that we try to overcome that by reversing the position and giving power to central Government, the bigger the mess we shall get into. It is time that we got away from the Government's attempts to change the system.

8.56 pm

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye, particularly as I have not been in the Chamber for the whole of the debate, due to a constituency engagement. I shall not dwell too much on what the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) said, except to say that I wholeheartedly agree that local government should govern locally within the financial strictures and confines imposed by central Government as the custodian of the public purse. I served my apprenticeship in local government and have a great affection for its integrity, provided that that integrity is not abused.

[Mr. John Heddle]

The only way that the integrity of local government can be preserved is by increasing local accountability. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, like many of my colleagues, will agree that there is no real local accountability in local government. If there were, the turnout at local elections would be comparable to that for general elections, but it is not. One in four, possibly fewer, turn out in local elections, as opposed to 80 per cent. in general elections.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) referred particularly to creative accounting, and what he said was most interesting. In *The Independent* last Friday, we all read how Manchester city council has quite deviously managed to find yet another way round the Government's financial controls, by selling off and then leasing back to itself some of its property assets. It is selling them not at arm's length on the open market, but to a company that it controls. I plead with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to take on board that devious form of creative accounting which simply seems to drive a coach and four through prudent financial arrangements.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) reminded the House that the Conservative Government of 1970-74 decided not to carry out the quinquennial revaluation which was due in 1973. I regret that as much as he does. However, it should not be forgotten by the House that the incoming Labour Government and then the Lib-Lab pact Government also ignored the fact that the quinquennial revaluation was not carried out in 1973, and they did not carry it out in 1978. That is why there has to be a radical overhaul today of the whole structure of the foundation of local government financing.

This debate has been useful because it has reminded us that the shire counties, which are much more prudent than many of the Labour-controlled inner-city authorities, have managed to contain their rates rise to 6·8 per cent. The Labour-controlled authorities have averaged overall an 8·7 per cent. increase and Lib-Lab councils are at 9·1 per cent. The jewel in the Liberal tiara, the Isle of Wight, has bestowed upon its ratepayers a 10 per cent. increase. However, those figures all pale into insignificance when compared with Waltham Forest—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not again."] This cannot be repeated too often. Waltham Forest has increased its rates by 67 per cent. and the London borough of Ealing has increased its rates by 72 per cent.

I welcome and support the rate support grant settlement, for two reasons. First, on the matter of expenditure provision, the settlement is generous with public expenditure provision up to £25·2 billion, an increase of over £3 billion on last year and an increase of 4·1 per cent. over local authorities' budgets for 1986 and 1987. Secondly, I support it because the Exchequer grant to the local authorities has been increased substantially by over £1 billion to nearly £13 billion, a 9 per cent. increase on last year. Grant-related expenditure has been increased by 4 per cent. However, there is still scope for savings by local authorities. They do not have to increase their grant-related expenditure by that 4 per cent.

I regret, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South reminded the House, that competitive tendering has not been made compulsory in the Local Government Bill now in Committee. I am sure that if that were done, many other local authorities could follow the example of Lancashire county council which, by bus deregulation, has managed to save the ratepayers in that county £6 million in subsidy. The ratepayers of Arun district council in West Sussex are grateful to the Conservative-controlled council because £300,000 of their money has been saved by the deregulation and privatisation of refuse collection.

I believe that local government has become too politicised. That politicisation and polarisation has caused an increasing number of local authorities to fall into the hands of extremists. That has caused a number of excellent directors and senior managers in local government to forsake local government as a career and go into the private sector. That is to the discredit of local government and the elected are the poorer for their absence.

I regret that, although Opposition Members have pleaded that the settlements for their local authorities have not been generous enough, they have not turned inward to their own councils in their own constituencies to see how efficiently their departments are run. When one looks at the number of empty houses and flats and the length of time that those houses and flats have been empty, and when one looks at the rent arrears in virtually every housing authority in the country, one can see money being wasted day by day because local authorities do not have a proprietorial interest in the management of their properties. The housing stock and the management of the housing stock in our local authorities should be put out to more caring and responsible authorities such as housing associations, building societies and other financial institutions. If that happens, the housing voids and rent arrears will be reduced. I welcome the rate support grant settlement.

9.4 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): It must be the profoundest hope of all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate that the days of the rate support grant system are numbered. The days of confusion and over-complication have lasted for too long and should be brought to an end. There is no doubt that during the past few years, under this Government, there has been a move towards local taxation by local government. There has been a steady reduction in central support for local government. That is entirely right if one believes that local government should be paid for locally. However local government is paid for, it accounts for between one quarter and one third of all national public expenditure and no responsible Government can afford to allow local authorities a free rein, especially when the horses are bolting mad, as we see happening in those parts of the country where the Labour party is in control — *[Interruption.]*

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) may well be the successor of Lord Birkenhead, but I suggest that he has not yet learned the virtues of the pregnant pause.

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Coombs: No. I have only four minutes left before the first of the Front Bench spokesmen rises, and I should like to make my speech, if I may.

In the recent history of Government efforts to control local government expenditure, we have seen rate capping, capital limitations, grant-related expenditure assessments and the like. As soon as one door has been closed, another has been opened by cunning Labour councillors and those

who work for them. However, the borrowing, creative accountancy and deferred payments continue. I advise my hon. Friend the Minister that sooner or later the lid will blow off this pot. What are the Government going to do about it?

My own local authority is one of those which face disaster. As one eloquent person on my local authority said recently, "It is a Labour Government or bust." There certainly will not be a Labour Government but, for the sake of the people of Thamesdown and Swindon, I hope that it will not be bust either.

If rate capping were removed from authorities such as Thamesdown, the rates would rise catastrophically. If, at the same time, Wiltshire county council were freed from the restrictions currently imposed upon it, it is highly likely that the rates of the people of Swindon would be doubled. That would be disastrous, not only for the private residents of Swindon, but for all the companies that have moved to the town over recent years to escape the cripplingly high rates in London.

I hope that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will reply to this point. If the Labour party still wants to win seats such as Swindon—there are still one or two people who think that that is the case—it must promise to exercise proper control over local Labour councillors to prevent inflation from hitting the pockets of ordinary people, either by rates increases or by the tax increases that would be needed to pay for the profligate expenditure that would be unleashed.

Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give a commitment to me, to my constituents and to the House that no future Labour Government—if there ever is one—will allow such disgraceful profligacy. I hope that he will make that commitment now so that my constituents can be reassured. I advise him that if he does not, there is no hope on earth that his party will ever win my constituency. I look to the Opposition Front Bench to give such a commitment tonight. If they do not, the writing is on the wall for the Labour party in seats such as mine.

9.9 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I share the confidence of the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) that there will be a Labour victory at Swindon. I want to place on record my confidence in Thamesdown council. Its fine record in seeking to maintain and increase employment in a town which has been devastated by the Government's closure of British Rail Engineering Ltd. has been complimented from all quarters.

Mr. Coombs: May I point out to the hon. Gentleman that a year after the closure of almost the whole of the BREL workshops operation in my constituency, unemployment is lower than it was the month before the closure? That demonstrates not activity by the Labour council, but the buoyancy of the local economy which would be severely devastated by massive rate rises. I asked the hon. Gentleman to promise the House that that will never happen.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman is being far less gracious than normal. He knows that Thamesdown council's record as a job creator is one of the best in the country. Had it not been for the work of the Labour council bringing employment into the area when faced with the loss of 2,500 jobs in Swindon, unemployment would have increased rather than decreased in the past two years. I know that that view is shared by the people of Thamesdown. Moreover, I understand that at the local elections the Conservative party came third, the alliance second and the Labour party first.

In previous years there has been one statement on the rate support grant in July, another in December giving the Government's final decisions and a single debate in early January. Thanks to the unparalleled incompetence of the Secretary of State, this year has been different. This rate support grant debate takes place 15 days after the legal date by which all the major spending shire counties the ILEA and the metropolitan joint boards, had by law to make their rates, and only six days before the legal deadline for all the district and borough councils. In practice, most of the latter have already set their rates.

In place of the usual single debate on rate support grant, scarcely a week has passed since Christmas without major debates on the latest instalment of the sad story of chaos to which the Secretary of State has reduced local government finance.

We started the year with a Local Government Finance Bill. Its Second Reading was on 12 January, Committee stages on 21, 26 and 27 January, and before it had even started its progress through the Lords, we had the Second Reading of the Rate Support Grants Bill on 4 February. Before it had returned from Committee, the Secretary of State introduced his third Bill in six weeks, the much truncated Local Government Bill. The Minister will agree that for some of us rate support grant feels like a life sentence. It is hardly surprising that hon. Members on both sides, to whom fate has been kinder, should now be so baffled by the system and its byzantine complexity that they prefer to leave it to those who must suffer its detail.

Although aspects of the rate support grant system are tedious beyond belief, and my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) entertained us, this debate raises crucial issues about the financing of local services and the future of local government.

The Secretary of State made significant claims for the increase in spending which was implied by the statement. He made much of the assertion that there had been a 30 per cent. real increase in local authority spending during the past eight years. He said nothing in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) about the fact that central Government spending had increased significantly faster — 19 percentage points — than that of local government. Above all, he failed to spell out whether he was in favour of or against that increase in spending.

In reality, in every year of this Conservative Administration, except for two pre-election years, the Government have intended that local authority spending shall be cut in that year and the following years. It is only because of the resistance of local councils — mainly Labour councils, although there are some Liberal and a number of Conservative councils—standing up for their electors that expenditure has increased rather than decreased.

Is the Secretary of State aware that it was the Government's plan that there should be a reduction of 9 per cent. in expenditure per school pupil between 1980-81 and 1985-86? Year by year, the Government planned to cut spending per pupil. However, spending per pupil has actually increased. Who is to take the credit for that?

[Mr. Straw]

The Prime Minister, whose gall knows no bounds, in answer to a hapless Conservative candidate at a by-election that was subsequently won by the Liberals, said:

"In education, too, this Government has a better record than any other. More money is being spent per pupil than ever before."

That is true. However, it is only true because Labour and Liberal local authorities have refused to accept the Government's injunctions.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Straw: I notice that the now speaking Whip from a sedentary position is shaking his head. He is one of the financial experts on the Conservative Benches. His financial acumen goes before him. Even if the hon. Gentleman cannot remember the words, perhaps he can look at the picture. I am showing the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends a chart which shows the path of Conservative public expenditure plans for education expenditure per pupil. I am glad to see that the speaking Whip has put his spectacles on. The line on the chart goes down with regard to planned expenditure. The other line shows the difference, revealing the record of local authorities standing up for their electors against the Conservatives' plan.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will listen to me while he is picking his teeth. As the Secretary of State has praised the increase in expenditure, is he pleased about the line on the chart going up, or is he sorry about the fact that it has not declined? I offer the Secretary of State an opportunity to comment on that. Which is it? He cannot have it both ways.

There is another way of underlining the record of Labour authorities. We can consider what has happened in the provision of nursery education in local authority after local authority. I must declare an interest, because I have one child in a nursery class at an ILEA primary school and another who has just left. The much abused Inner London education authority has increased the provision of nursery places within inner London by 3,600, and that is an increase of more than one sixth over the past six years. The same is true for Birmingham which in the past three years, since Labour gained control, has increased the number of nursery places by 1,000 from 7,700 to 8,700. That has been achieved against the injunctions of the Secretary of State, although the Prime Minister has given a parliamentary answer saying that she is pleased about the increased number of nursery school places.

What about Bromley? I am sorry about the pain suffered by the hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt). We have heard today about Bromley's fine record. Bromley is no different in size from Brent. Brent Labour authority — a much abused and maligned Labour authority—has 2,304 nursery school places. Bromley has 97. It is to the lasting shame of Bromley that that figure has been reduced from 101 in 1981 to 97 this year.

What about Somerset? When that council was Conservative controlled, it reduced the number of nursery school places from a paltry 137 to a completely derisory 68.

As the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are so concerned about nursery school provision and claim unto themselves the record of good Labour authorities, what does the Secretary of State think about Gloucestershire? Gloucestershire has no figures recorded in the parliamentary answer to which I have referred because it has no nursery school places in any maintained school. That is the reality of Conservatives in local government. It is one reason why Conservatives have done so badly in local elections during the past four years.

Mr. Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman cast his mind back to the imaginative nursery school programme put forward by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science? In 1974, when the Labour Government came to power, they cancelled it.

Mr. Heffer: What did she do? She took the milk away.

Mr. Straw: I apologise for the fact that I could not hear all the question asked by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), but I got the gist of it. I think that he was trying to resurrect the Prime Minister's record when she was Secretary of State for Education and Science. One thing I will concede is that her record in that previous incarnation was marginally better than her record as Prime Minister. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) just pointed out, she is most remembered during that period for taking the milk away from schoolchildren.

Mr. Hind: Labour cut it back.

Mr. Straw: As the hon. Gentleman is so excited about this matter, I shall send him the reply which I received from the Prime Minister when I wrote to her about this increase in spending per pupil and the fine record of Labour local authorities. Nothing can detract from the reality that the Conservative Government and all Conservative Members have voted year by year for cuts in spending on education. Education has been protected only by the actions of Labour local authorities.

When the Secretary of State first came to the House in July to announce his rate support grant decisions, he said that he anticipated that on the basis of this settlement, authorities need not increase their rates at all. He also said:

"This will mean that if authorities spend in line with the generous provision that we have made, there should on average be no need for rate bills to increase at all."—[*Official Report*, 22 July 1986; Vol. 102, c. 181.]

The howls then from many Conservative authorities told us that that statement was untrue. We can only assume that the Secretary of State reckoned that it was incorrect. In the event, and despite changes in the rate support grant, designed explicitly to help Conservative authorities and to hit Labour ones, many authorities are having to raise their rates well above the prevailing level of inflation, regardless of political control.

We have heard a great deal about significant rates increases in the London boroughs of Ealing, Hammersmith and Waltham Forest. Each is a Labour authority which took over from a Conservative authority last year. Each authority, when Conservative-controlled, went in for creative accountancy on a grand scale in a desperate, and unsuccessful, attempt to keep its rates down in a local election year because it raised less by way of rates than it needed to meet expenditure. Those Labour councils have had to put their finances on a sound footing and have sought to provide much-needed improvements to basic services, such as schools, housing and care for the elderly, which had been badly run down by their predecessors.

I am glad to see the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Yound) in his place. I am not surprised that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who made a disgraceful speech, is not here for the wind-up speeches. That is typical of the way in which he treats his local authority and the House. The Ealing issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland remains unanswered. Ealing has recruited 150 extra teachers, employed extra home helps and under-fives staff, restored free milk to 10,000 first-year school pupils and given schools 11 per cent. more to spend on equipment and books. Are Conservative Members in favour of those improvements or against them?

Sir George Young: As the hon. Gentleman knows, Ealing town hall is virtually closed and the switchboard operators are on strike—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] We are faced with a 65 per cent. rates increase, but the services are simply not there.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman evaded my question. I know that there is a strike in Ealing. Strikes sometimes take place in authorities, whether Conservative or Labour-controlled. I hope that if the hon. Gentleman is concerned about keeping public expenditure under control, he will support Ealing council in resisting the claims of the local staff who are seeking a gratuitous increase in the outer London allowance. Whom does the hon. Gentleman support? Does he support the council or does he support the staff? Is he trying to make mischief out of a situation of the kind that has affected a number of authorities? The hon. Gentleman, and those who represent Ealing, must say where they stand on those improvements to services. Their silence speaks volumes about their approach to the provision of basic services in that area.

Many Labour authorities have not had to bear such an inheritance as that borne by Ealing, Waltham Forest and Hammersmith, and they have kept their rate rises at or below the prevailing level of inflation. Leeds has increased its rate by only 4·5 per cent., Barking and Dagenham rates have gone up by only 2·5 per cent., and a number of Labour authorities—for instance, Birmingham—have actually cut their rates.

Mr. Greg Knight: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: I have given up 10 minutes of the time available for my winding-up speech to Conservative Members. I should be grateful for an opportunity to finish my speech.

Birmingham has cut its rate by 6·1 per cent.; Sunderland by 1·5 per cent.; and the authorities in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland have also cut their rates.

The Secretary of State wanted to compliment Solihull for cutting its rate by 1·8 per cent. Does he wish to compliment Copeland and Blackburn for cutting their rates by an even greater amount? I shall give him the opportunity, if he wishes to do so.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) wishes to.

Mr. Greg Knight: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us whether he is as proud of other areas of expenditure by Labour-controlled authorities? For example, does he welcome the expenditure by Derbyshire county council of many hundreds of thousands of pounds of ratepayers' money on items such as television advertising and the publication of a civic newspaper? The latest proposal is to send a number of Socialist councillors on a television interview training course.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland has just produced a copy of "Housing Matters" which is published by Conservative-controlled Portsmouth council, and I am very grateful to him—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only one hon. Member can speak at a time.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) says that he does not support such expenditure. I know that most of the claims against Derbyshire are fabrications, and that Mr. David Bookbinder has had to issue a writ against the chairman of the Conservative party for a total and malicious falsehood uttered against Derbyshire county council last year.

The responsibility for the present chaos is the Minister's, and his alone. We do not criticise officials, and I hope that the Minister does not either. However, to excuse himself from the mess, the Secretary of State has tried two diversionary tactics. His first—together with the Conservative party chairman—is to heap abuse on democratically elected authorities with which he happens to disagree. His second is to suggest that the present mess is all of his predecessor's making, and that once the country adopts the idea of the poll tax, sanity and stability will return to local government. Let me deal with those in turn.

It is a symptom of the Conservative party's desperation that most of its so-called criticism of Labour authorities is based on simple, straightforward falsehoods. The lies that have been printed about many Labour authorities could have come direct from Dr. Goebbels. Of course, we expect nothing else from newspapers that draw their inspiration from pre-war Germany, but we should be able to expect something rather better from senior Ministers charged with responsibility to the Crown and to the House for the conduct of the nation's affairs.

Indeed, we got something better from the Secretary of State's predecessors, such as the right hon. Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) and for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). We had the most serious arguments with them, but at least we could discern some common ground of concern for the services that local government provides and for the 2·5 million people who work for those authorities. Not so from the present Secretary of State. He is a zealot who despises any institution that he cannot control, whether it be Labour or Tory local authorities, or even the High Court of Justice. When the Secretary of State loses before the High Court of Justice, he comes to the House and bleats that he has been the subject of a vendetta by judges.

All the authorities on which such abuse has been heaped were elected less than a year ago, in the municipal elections last May. The last accusation that can be levelled against any of those authorities, especially those in London, is that they made any secret of their policies. Each of them made publicly available extensive manifestos. If the Government were serious about extending accountability and re-establishing a better consensus on local government, they would respond positively to the offer that I made on Second Reading of the Local Government Bill for the immediate and agreed introduction of annual elections in London

[Mr. Straw]

boroughs and in shire districts that do not have them. Conservative Members talk about authorities falling into the hands of people with whom they disagree. That shows their contempt for democracy. Those authorities have not fallen into anybody's hands. There have been elections. Conservative Members and their colleagues have been decisively rejected at the ballot box in towns and cities across the land.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): By people who do not foot the bill.

Mr. Straw: I shall come to that point.

The Secretary of State's second alibi is to claim that the present system has nothing to do with him, and all will be changed under his so-called reforms. Both claims are nonsense. The Secretary of State has supported every one of the 43 Bills that have created the present chaos. This Secretary of State's hands are as stained as those of his predecessors whom he now seeks to disown.

If it is possible to comprehend or imagine, the Secretary of State proposes—if, God forbid, the Government are re-elected to office—to substitute for this chaos an even worse chaos through the introduction of a poll tax or community charge, as Ministers would have us euphemistically describe it. I tell Ministers for their own good that as the public come to understand what the poll tax involves, support for them among middle and lower income families across the country will disappear.

Many Conservative Members do not like us quoting the Tory Reform Group. When my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland quoted it, the Under-Secretary of State said that it did not matter and that although 10 former senior members of the Government, including the Secretary of State for Employment, the Home Secretary and the deputy Prime Minister, had signed it, there is a note on the inside disclaiming responsibility for a document written by somebody who used to be assistant director of the Conservative research department and who was adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment when the poll tax idea was dreamed up. I have to tell the Under-Secretary that if the disclaimer is on his copy, it is not on mine. I notice that none of those senior Cabinet Ministers has decided to take his name off the front of the document. It says:

"The proposed community charge . . . is misconceived and it will undermine local self-government . . . it will involve substantial excessive centralisation of power . . . isolate businesses from local government; fail to achieve the degree of accountability that is required; be administratively expensive."

The document gives the game away at the end. It says that Ministers had to act with excessive haste, and states:

"Suddenly, with a difficult Party Conference debate on rates coming up, Ministers went into a 180 degree turn and felt they had to find a quick alternative to rates. It was one of the rare occasions when a Party Conference actually determined Government policy."

That is because the Conservatives are not used to democracy in their party or across parties. The document states:

"The speed of change led the Department to bounce the key Cabinet Ministers into a poll tax".

They will come to rue the day.

My hon. Friends the Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Copeland have already quoted the political present that the Minister for Local Government gave all the Labour candidates in the marginal seats in Lancashire. I am deeply grateful for that. I think that the Minister did it out of affection for his home ground of Rossendale and Darwen. He knows how his people will be badly hit by a poll tax which, in Rossendale, will double the burden on middle income people, so he is trying to subvert the idea before it has even got off the ground.

I want to ask the Minister some questions about the poll tax. The Government's objection to rates is that only one third of electors pay full rates, and they propose to require every elector to pay at least 20 per cent. of their rate or poll tax bill under legislation that has already been passed. If, subject to that 20 per cent. minimum, the Government continue with the rebate system, no more families will pay the full poll tax than pay full rates. Will the Minister adhere to that, or is it the Secretary of State's intention to raise the floor from 20 per cent. to 50 per cent., or even to 80 per cent., as has been rumoured?

In the past eight years rates have risen twice as fast as retail prices, but local government spending has grown far less than that of national Government. It is the Government, not local councils, who have deliberately forced up local rate bills and cut the rate support grant by £4,000 million a year, which means over £4 a week for every family in the land. In so doing, they have forced the public to pay more than they have gained through the cuts in income tax rates that have been announced in the past three Budgets.

Under the settlement, rates are to be forced up again. The only way out of the bog that the Secretary of State can perceive is to introduce a poll tax that would benefit the rich at the expense of middle Britain and of the poor. This is a bad settlement from an unbelievably incompetent Secretary of State, and we shall oppose it.

9.37 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): Like the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), I shall deal with the community charge at the end, and with the basis of the rate support grant first.

This year's settlement is a generous one, and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, it contains an increase of 9 per cent. on the past year—representing £12·842 billion in grant for local authorities. Similarly, Government plans for 1987-88 provide for local authority capital expenditure to increase by almost £700 million—an increase of 15 per cent.—to about £5 billion. For the full grant to be given to each authority, it is assumed that expenditure will increase by no more than 5·25 per cent. That is still above the rate of inflation—now running at about 4·5 per cent.—and the addition for teachers' pay means that local authorities' expenditure can go up by 7·75 per cent. on average without loss of the full grant from the Government.

Opposition Members have mentioned what local authorities may not get, but authorities will lose money only if they overspend; so it is up to them whether they get grants or not. If they go over the top, they will forfeit them. If they have to hand the money back, that is on their heads. We do not claw it back intentionally.

I shall give Opposition Members a tip to pass on to their overspending councils. If they can cut the increase in their expenditure to 4·5 per cent., they will get £100 million more. We should be delighted to see such financial sobriety. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) mentioned a figure of £400 million that

appears in the Red Book. I have looked for it there and have not been able to find it. Perhaps we can meet afterwards with an umpire to discuss the matter.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Member for Copeland claimed that the Government expected rate rises from the Exchequer that were significantly higher than the 6 per cent. that was quoted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have tracked down the reconciliation of 8·5 per cent. and 6 per cent. in order to put the hon. Gentleman right, because what he said was erroneous.

The reconciliation with the 6 per cent. increase in rate poundage is as follows. Of the 2·5 per cent difference, over 1 per cent. represents buoyancy in rateable values; 0·5 per cent. represents the fact that we are talking about England alone, and rate rises in Scotland are unfortunately even higher; another 0·5 per cent. is because we now have better information; the final 0·5 per cent is—*[Interruption.]* Right enough: hon. Members do not like it now that we are putting the figures right. They can throw figures across, but they do not like it when they are thrown back. But there the actual figures are and they are perfectly clear. We can have a look at it together afterwards. The offer is on the floor ready to be picked up. How much more generous could I be?

One should also put on the record regarding the rate support grant the difference of increase between Conservative and Labour and Liberal authorities, as my right hon. Friend did. These figures are up to midday today, so they could not be more up to date. Conservative authorities as a whole are spending 7·5 per cent. more and are levying a rate of 5·4 per cent. more. Labour authorities not rate-capped are spending 9·6 per cent. more, which is 2 per cent. more than Conservative authorities, and they are levying rates of 12·4 per cent. more—7 per cent. on average more than Conservative authorities. In hung councils they are spending 9·4 per cent. more and levying 7 per cent. more.

Mrs Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: I will give way in a minute. I must just give these figures in case I forget them, and I would not like to deprive the House.

Among the shires, the Conservative authorities are spending 6·5 per cent. more and the Labour authorities are spending 8·7 per cent. more. Among London boroughs which are not rate-capped, in Conservative boroughs the increase in rates is 4·6 per cent. only. The increase in non-rate-capped Labour boroughs in London is 60·6 per cent. —15 times more. If the electorate wants to know what a Labour Government would be like, there it is.

Reference has been made to the three London boroughs, and I shall mention them again. I know that Opposition Members do not like them mentioned. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to hear that they do not mind; we can tell the electors that.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that Lancashire county council has shot away with rates every years since it took office? This year, with the assistance of the Liberals, the rate has doubled. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Niggers in the woodpile."] The Conservative-controlled city councils kept their rates absolutely level and the Wyre borough council's rate was barely in concert with the cost of living. So we are streets ahead of Labour and the Liberals.

Dr. Boyson: There comes the voice of confidence from the Conservative Benches. We heard the silence from the Opposition Benches as those figures were given.

I should like to mention again the three boroughs, as a warning to the country. The increase in the local rate in Hammersmith and Fulham is 127 per cent. My hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) have both talked this evening about the increase in Ealing and I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North was absent for only a short while because residents of Ealing were coming to see him about this increase. The increase there is 72 per cent. In Waltham Forest the increase is 67 per cent.

The only reason that Brent has not increased similarly, when it went from basically Conservative and Liberal support to Labour this year, is the fact that it is rate-capped. I know that many people in the three other boroughs will wish that they were rate-capped as well. As hon. Members know, rate capping is on the basis of budgeted spending for the previous year in relation to GRE, not on the rate increase for the year itself.

Indeed, 40 local authorities which are subject to rate capping and precept limitation for this coming year were responsible last year for 90 per cent. of the overspending the length and breadth of Britain. If that is not a defence of rate capping, I do not know what is.

Time and time again Opposition Members have referred to a north-south divide, as though money were being kept in the so-called prosperous areas of the south and even being dragged away from the north. Let us look at the figures.

Each year, about £1 billion in grant moves from the south-east and London to the north—the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside. I am not grumbling about that, but that figure should be put on the record. Labour Members have bleeding hearts, as though Conservative Members were hard-faced and taking money from the north. That is not the case. Every year £1 billion goes up there.

This year, 1987-88, out of the increased expenditure this year, added to last year's figure, the north will receive £375 million in grant from the Government, compared with £150 million for the south. Two and a half times more will go to the north than to the south. That should be put on the record.

Total expenditure on urban programmes has increased from £140 million from 1978-79 to £531 million in 1987-88 —a real increase of 131 per cent. since the Government took office.

Fifty-seven authorities now produce inner-area programmes, compared with 24 when the Government took office in 1979. Since 1979, £2·2 billion in resources has been redistributed through the urban programme. More than £2 billion of private finance has also been brought in, because that Government money has been a leader that has helped things along the way. Those figures are important and should be respected. About £1 billion is switched to Merseyside every year by various grants.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman knows that that aid to the urban areas is dwarfed by the £18,000 million cut in rate support grant since 1979. The Minister talks about so-called overspending by Labour authorities and blames them because that has gone against Government spending plans. However, will he consider the point that I have put

[Mr. Straw]

to him? Is he in favour of the fact that that overspending has led to an increase in spending per pupil in schools, or is he against that?

Dr. Boyson: The Government give money and local authorities should establish the priorities. Ealing is a good example of what such priorities can be.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Boyson: No, I shall not give way. I have been asked two questions and I have now forgotten one of them. Hard luck—that has gone. I acted genuinely and one answer will have to be the Opposition's lot.

Now that the hon. Gentleman has brought my attention to Ealing, let us see where the expenditure has gone. I would have forgotten about it if it had not been for his help. Expenditure in Ealing on the police co-ordinator will be £18,000 a year. A new office block to house 1,100 more staff will cost £20,000 a week. *[Interruption.]* I know that that is difficult to take in, but my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) should try. A teacher in each school paid to rid bookshelves of sexist or heterosexist material will cost £139,000. One could go on.

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: I shall not give way.

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. Boyson *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Member for Blackburn has already had two minutes more than me. I gave way to the hon. Gentleman and to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman).

A Labour councillor from a neighbouring borough, hired as a personal assistant to the Labour authority, will cost £40,000 a year.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Boyson: I shall give way for one question only.

Dr. Cunningham: I am extremely grateful to the Minister for giving way. He is discussing additional spending in Ealing and I can do better than him with regard to the totals. Does he support the additional spending in Ealing of £500,000 on extra care for the elderly? Does he support the additional spending on education in Ealing? *[Interruption.]* Does he support the additional expenditure on recreation and sports facilities in Ealing? Does he support the additional expenditure on housing for the elderly?

Dr. Boyson: The figures quoted by the hon. Member for Copeland represent a minute amount of the 65 per cent. increase in the rates. If that is the only point that the Opposition can make, they are in a bad way.

Other hon. Members have asked questions and they expect replies. The so-called "Bromley error" has been referred to by hon. Members from both sides of the House. I would like to put on record what the position is regarding that matter, as I am aware of the concern that is felt by many hon. Friends about this matter.

Due to an error, Bromley and certain other boroughs did not receive their due money for the necessary maintenance of the roads that they had inherited from 1986 after the abolition of the GLC. That grant should have been worked out on the kilometre distance of the roads and the usage of the roads. However, certain costs were not worked out properly. My right hon. Friend attempted to correct the error in the first 1986-87 supplementary report by adjusting the multipliers. He was then challenged on a question of law, not on a question of equity.

That should be made clear, because I believe that, in the ultimate, the test of equity is important in the preservation of good society. My right hon. Friend was not challenged on equity, but on law as to whether he could use the multipliers in that way. The court decided in favour of Greenwich. The hon. Member for Copeland asked why the Government are appealing while, at the same time——

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington) *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: If I may just finish this point.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Abolish the court.

Dr. Boyson: We did not say anything about abolishing the court—that idea is usually proposed by the Left. One can see how easily the Left consider the idea of abolishing the courts and the rule of law.

We rightly went to the Court of Appeal, but meanwhile, as a law-abiding Government—I trust that the hon. Member for Copeland would have done the same—we adjusted the figure this year. At the same time, we hoped that we would win on the appeal so that in a supplementary report, after consultation, we could rectify the inequity which existed.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir. B. Braine) asked what would happen if the Court of Appeal's judgment was in favour of the Government. Once that happens, we will consult——

Mr. Dicks *rose*——

Dr. Boyson: I will give way when I finish. But let us get to the loud amen before we start the next hymn.

If we win in the Court of Appeal, we will consult as quickly as we can and then make an adjustment in a supplementary report. If we do not succeed in the appeal, we shall have to reassess the situation.

The Government believe that that issue also involves a question of equity as well as law. Eventually, we hope that the law is returned—as we trust that it will be by the Court of Appeal—to an equitable basis so that those for whom money was intended shall have that money rather than the other authorities which were not intended to have that money. I am aware that the main losing authorities were Bromley, £3·1 million; Barnet, £2·7 million; Essex, £2·4 million; Hillingdon, £2·3 million; Kingston, £1·4 million; Sutton, £1·3 million; and Bexley, £1 million.

Mr. Dicks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. First of all, may I correct him? The amount involved for Hillingdon is £4·6 million—£2·3 million this year and £2·3 million next year. As a result of the mess-up and incompetence in my hon. Friend's Department—*[Interruption.]*—wait for it—and the dishonesty of Greenwich, my local authority has lost £4·6 million. What guarantee can my hon. Friend give me that my local authority will not lose out in the long run because of that?

Hon. Members: Answer that!

Dr. Boyson: I shall answer, and the Opposition may listen if they are quiet.

I have already discussed the matter over lunch with my hon. Friend. He is to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself tomorrow. We shall obviously continue the discussion in private. We do not want to delay the matter in any way.

Mr. Michie: Will the Minister have dinner with me? *[Interruption.]*

Dr. Boyson: I am referring only to roads in London. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's offer is on the menu at present.

Let me refer to the community charge. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I am delighted to refer to it. I find it astonishing that some people were amazed when they saw the figures. They show the impact of the community charge. They have been available for some time. They are in no way secret. The Government have nothing to hide.

Journalists from various regions visited the Department on Monday. They were given figures that they could have acquired from books on Monday. As we had given them the figures, I felt that the least we could do was to send hon. Members of all parties — including the Liberals and the SDP—copies of what we had given the regional journalists. It seemed to me to be the way that hon. Members should be treated. There was amazement. Anybody with a ready reckoner, and knowledge of the current population level of any area and the domestic rate could work out the whole matter in three hours. Indeed, the figures are already shown in three books, two of which are in the Library. First, there is "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Straw: I have a copy.

Dr. Boyson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is catching up at last. He is fortunate to know me. It is a great advantage.

The other book is "The Community Charge—The Effects on English Local Authorities" by John Gibson. I do not get a commission for this. There is also a book by the Institute of Fiscal Studies. Yet there is amazement when we provide the figures. One wonders how the Opposition's Budget figures are worked out.

Community charge figures have been published separately. Hon. Members should watch for the dates. In May 1986, CIPFA published its figures, which is, as far as I know, ten months back, the Institute of Fiscal Studies published figures in March 1986—even further back—and the Institute of Local Government Studies published figures also in March 1986. Copies of the publications exist in the Library of the House. Although none of the organisations has the figures quite right, it is quite clear that anybody who was interested could have gained a reasonably accurate idea of the impact of the Government's proposals in different parts of the country at any time.

I make another offer to Opposition Members. We are quite willing to make available our estimates for the level of the community charge in each local authority area. Last year, the Department passed on 1984-85 figures in response to a request from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. We are happy to provide 1985-86 figures to any hon. Member who wants them. The service that we provide is amazing. It is famous on both sides of the House. We are not even a private enterprise.

It is our intention shortly to place in the Library a complete set of community charge figures for 1986-87. The whole basis of the community charge on the universal business rate is based on a certain political view. We believe that businesses are moving around the country, not to where they should geographically be positioned, but to where the lowest rates are. That is one reason businesses are leaving the north and going to the south. Undoubtedly, business rates in the north are far higher than they are in the south. If we are to link the north-south divide—as a northerner who lives in the south, I shall like that—that is one of the best ways to do it. That is why we have the universal business rate.

The community charge is to make sure that all people voting, even if it is on the rebate, are doing — *[Interruption.]* We said about 20 per cent. It has not been fixed. I shall give a figure. The whole basis of the system is that voters should pay something towards the services that they receive. They should not just be voting to spend other people's money.

I believe that that is right and that this is a good settlement. I am glad that I have been able to give information to the Opposition that they will be able to study through the night.

Question put:-

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 173.

Division No. 125] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy

Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham H'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'caster)*
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*

Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 253) which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

Rate Support Grant (England)

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 3) 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 259), which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Rate Support Grant (England)

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 258), which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

10.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): I beg to move,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 221), which was laid before this House on 19th March, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: With this, I understand we are to consider also the motion

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 222), which was laid before this House on 19th March.

Mr. Edwards: The main report for the forthcoming financial year is customarily laid in the preceding December and debated in the following month. This time, difficulties over the definition of total and relevant expenditure, recently resolved by the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1987, meant that the normal timetable for both reports could not be met. Nevertheless, in my statement to the House on 16 December I gave full details of my firm intentions for the 1987-88 settlement and the 1986-87 supplementary report, to give councils adequate time to draw up budgets and set rates. So that they could do so with certainty, I said then that no data received subsequently would alter my intentions. That is the situation.

The reports laid before the House last week reflect, with one minor exception concerned with inter-county education pooling, precisely my intentions announced in December. These education pooling adjustments will now be made in supplementary reports following the enactment of the Local Government Bill. Until they are made, Welsh counties will have a cash flow advantage of around £7 million. I do not intend, therefore, to spell out again the details of the 1987-88 report, but it is important to set out certain of its main features, particularly to provide a context for what I shall have to say later about the spending and rating policies of some Welsh local authorities.

The 1986-87 settlement was a good one for Wales. The 1987-88 settlement is even better. Relevant expenditure is increased by 6·1 per cent. to £1,734 million, current expenditure by 4·8 per cent. to £1,496·5 million, aggregate Exchequer grant by 8·4 per cent. to £1,157 million and block grant by 6·1 per cent. to £901·7 million. All these increases are higher than the 4·5 per cent. forecast rate of inflation. It is also important to recognise that there is provision for extra capital spending in 1987-88. Allocations for capital investment have been increased by £47 million, or 14 per cent., to a record £369 million, following a £60 million increase in the previous year. This increases the total investment in capital projects since 1979-80 to £3·5 billion, and that does not include the multiplier effects created by urban programme and urban development grant expenditure in the private sector.

The first supplementary report for 1986-87 distributes the full amount of block grant provided under the settlement. Provision for aggregate relevant expenditure has been increased to allow for increases in police pay, expenditure on midday supervision in schools and GCSE. Block grant has therefore been increased by £1·3 million. Specific grants are now £5·2 million higher at £174·7 million. The total of local authorities' GREs for the year has been reset in line with provision, but authorities' block grant entitlements will not be affected on this account.

On the basis of the 1987-88 settlement, ratepayers, both business and domestic, were entitled to expect very low average rate rises, and rate reductions in some cases. I am sorry to say that too many local authorities have simply ignored the opportunity that they were given to take responsible and moderate decisions which could and should have provided their ratepayers with significant benefits. Far from exercising restraint, they have chosen to budget for very high levels of spending and therefore to set rates at a much higher level than was necessary.

The county councils together have budgeted to increase their expenditure by 9·1 per cent. compared with an increase of 7·1 per cent. allowed for in the settlement after taking into account the effect of increasing teachers' pay. In Dyfed there has been a real terms spending increase, which I have to say I regard as disgraceful and indefensible. The county council was presented with a golden opportunity to reduce its precept substantially. By spending in line with the settlement, a 6 per cent. reduction could have been achieved. Instead, Dyfed ratepayers face an increase of 7 per cent., in part to pay for a significant increase in the number of staff employed, something that other counties in Wales do not seem to find necessary. That is an astonishing performance by a council professing to be anxious to secure better employment prospects for its area, and is not the way to attract investment and extra jobs, nor to protect the interests of domestic ratepayers. Ratepayers in Gwent are also faced with similarly damaging increases in expenditure and rates, and in every county in Wales rates have been set higher than can possibly be justified on the basis of this settlement.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Secretary of State explain to the House why he needs to persist in attacking Dyfed county council when he has now announced his retirement as a Dyfed Member of Parliament? Will he explain why it is wrong for a local authority that requires to increase employment in its area to increase its staff? Why is it only the private sector that wins plaudits from the Secretary of State?

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman does not yet understand that, if one increases rates by a substantial margin, one discourages private business from setting up and generating employment, I am afraid that it is much too late to start teaching him the lesson. However, it is certain that businesses understand perfectly well and they will have taken note of the damaging and unnecessary increase by the Dyfed county council.

District spending as a whole is set to increase broadly in line with the settlement, but while many district councils have sought to hold their rates down, some have budgeted for spending increases which they will have to justify. However, they cannot possibly justify them on the ground that the resources that they have been given under the settlement are inadequate. Of the seven districts which should have been able to reduce their rates, only one has actually done so. Three of the others have expenditure and rate rises well above the average, and in Colwyn a spending increase of 8·5 per cent.—almost double the forecast rate of inflation—results in an increase in average rate bills which is almost double that of other districts in Clwyd. I warmly congratulate Cardiff, which

is in the middle of major and ambitious schemes, on its good management and good sense in reducing rates. Rate bills in Cardiff will go up by 3·6 per cent., which is less than half the all-Wales average of 7·8 per cent.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I thank my right hon. Friend for that appropriate reference to Cardiff, but I hope that he will take the opportunity to emphasise that the reverse has been achieved by South Glamorgan county council. Its precept has gone up by 4·1 per cent., but it has not followed my right hon. Friend's advice and formula in his settlement. In fact, it is levying an extra precept on the ratepayers of Cardiff, particularly business ratepayers, of effectively a 6 per cent. increase.

Mr. Edwards: South Glamorgan undoubtedly had an opportunity to hold its precept with virtually no increase, but it has chosen to increase it by more than is necessary. That is undoubtedly true. The action of the city council in reducing expenditure below what we had expected has had the effect of pulling the total rate bill for local ratepayers down below what it would otherwise have been. I congratulate the city on that result and on its decision.

All the councils which have set their rates and budgets above the settlement level bear a heavy responsibility for their decisions. I am sure that their ratepayers and electors will look hard at the reasons for such behaviour and draw their own conclusions in holding them accountable. The counties should know that, as a consequence of their decisions, the aggregate budget overspend for the year amounts to £24 million. This means that they have planned to underclaim available grant by a staggering £12 million.

Ratepayers should know that under the Rate Support Grants Act 1987 each council which reduces its spending will attract additional grant directly to itself. Many districts have, in fact, done that, and as a consequence the districts as a whole can expect to receive about £0·4 million more than allowed for under the settlement. Ratepayers should know that it is entirely the responsibility of the counties to put matters right. They can do so and avoid forfeiting £12 million in grant by spending in line with the settlement. I trust that each will do so. They have only to look at more prudent councils to see the benefits that more responsible action could bring.

We read in the *Western Mail* today:

> "Shadow Welsh Secretary Mr. Barry Jones is set to launch a bitter attack on the Government's record of funding Welsh councils, in a Commons debate tonight."

I see that the hon. Gentleman is going to challenge me to justify the more than 10 per cent. cut in rate support grant to Welsh councils since the Conservative Government took office. He plans to counter criticisms of councils' rate increases. I read that "Mr. Jones" will also protest that Government grants cuts have meant that councils have had to turn to their ratepayers to raise more revenue.

I am all for this new convention of publishing speeches in advance. I shall answer the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). First, on the question of the grant reduction since 1978-79, we have reduced grants to local authorities by around 6 per cent., not 10·9 per cent. The hon. Gentleman has forgotten the £40 million increase in specific and supplementary grants. We did it deliberately because we are determined to improve accountability. [AN HON. MEMBER: "It does not."] The hon. Gentleman says that it does not. However, that is the policy of the Association of District Councils which, in its response to our proposals for the reform of local government finance said that

> "their long term aim is to ensure that the aggregate revenue received locally exceeds that provided by central government".

I am afraid that I have some way to go. Such a policy would involve a reduction from the present 66·7 per cent. to less than 50 per cent.

Now, unfortunately for the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, this policy cannot possibly be taken as an excuse for increases in rates this year. The reduction took place in the period before 1985-86. The grant percentage has been kept fairly constant for the last two years. As usual the hon. Gentleman is living in the past. The interesting thing is that in the period of reduction up to 1985-86, rates rose by 7 per cent. less than the retail prices index. During the last two years when the grant percentage has been stable, rates have risen by 14 per cent. more than the RPI.

The fact is that this year, as last, grant has not been reduced. The settlement has been generous and too many local authorities have deliberately chosen to put rates up. If the hon. Gentleman now changes tack and challenges the level of service and justifies authorities that try hard to spend more, I have to remind him that Welsh local authorities are already spending 4 per cent. more in real terms than they were in 1978-79, and on present plans will be spending about 5·5 per cent. more than they were in the harsh post-IMF days of the Labour Government.

It is a matter for regret that some authorities have chosen to increase the burden on their ratepayers instead of making better use of the many opportunities open to them to obtain savings and to ensure better value for money. The Audit Commission, whose illuminating reports have covered most of the key areas of local authority spending has made many suggestions for achieving better use of resources. Sensible cash flow management, for example, may not attract many votes or the direct attention of ratepayers, but the savings available in this area alone could lead to significant reductions in budgeted expenditure. No one could possibly argue that that would represent an assault on services. There are many other opportunities available. In pursuing them authorities should take advantage of the substantial increase in capital allocations that I have made available for 1987-88 to achieve revenue savings. Education authorities, for example, should take steps urgently to cut the number of empty school places. I have expressly provided in the increased capital allocations for 1987-88 for the capital costs to enble them to do this. Responsibility now rests with local education authorities to pay for better quality education instead of empty desks.

Local authorities have a major responsibility to provide effective, efficient and economic services on behalf of their communities. If they do not, they will be failing in their duty towards their domestic and commercial ratepayers, who have a right to expect a fair deal and financial prudence. Councils which have not taken the opportunity provided by the settlement to maintain services and keep rate bills down will have to answer to their electorate. The councils concerned still have an opportunity to bring their spending, which is far above what they were spending under the Labour Government, back into line with the settlement and so to attract at least the full amount of

[Mr. Edwards]

grant that I have made available for next year. I urge them to do so. I commend my proposals for 1986-87 and 1987-88 to the House.

10.31 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): We have heard tonight one of the most unpleasant speeches of any of our debates. It was full of bluster and ill-will and was a desperate attempt to rewrite history. The Secretary of State in none of his utterances showed the House that he understood that this was a debate about matters which affect the lives of many ordinary people or showed the human face that his office requires of him.

The Secretary of State made crude, unjustifiable attacks on Welsh councils. We know that the right hon. Gentleman is playing politics and electioneering, but the truth is that he has not given sufficient money to our councils. Now the luckless councils must pick up the pieces. Today he has tried to whip up hysteria against local authorities, but with his speech he has condemned his record of eight years in office.

Between 1979 and 1986 there were seven Acts of Parliament on local government finance. Three further Bills appeared this year, retrospective legislation and frequent changes in reports such as these. During the 1980s the Government's incompetence has destabilised local government, particularly local government finance, in Wales. The Secretary of State has been uniquely implicated in that sorry saga.

The House of Commons research staff has told me that the cumulative cut in rate support grant since 1978-79 is £672 million at 1986-87 prices. When we take that into account, the right hon. Gentleman's vicious attack is seen to be most unjust and reprehensible.

Having outlined the amount that local authorities have been denied since the Secretary of State took office, I must state the problems that local authorities are having to cope with. In December 1985 there were 181,000 people unemployed in Wales, yet in December 1979 there were 78,000. In effect, in a very few years, the right hon. Gentleman had pushed unemployment up by about 131 per cent. The case that the Opposition make to the Secretary of State is that the reports that we are debating tonight are insufficient to respond to the social consequences of such tragic figures. For example, there are 32,000 people unemployed in mid-Glamorgan. Blaenau Gwent has a male unemployment rate of 23 per cent. There are 15,000 people jobless in Gwynedd, and in the Shotton travel-to-work area male unemployment hovers on 21 per cent.

Those statistics mask despair. The reports give insufficient cash to the local authorities which must pick up the pieces. The reports do not repair the damage caused by the years that have passed since the Secretary of State and his Government have been responsible for the economy and local authority matters in Wales.

I have established that the cuts in manpower in local government have led to a deterioration of services. For example, the number of manual employees employed in the collection and disposal of refuse has dropped by 26 per cent. The number of manual council employees in building work has gone down by 31 per cent., the local authority transport provision has dropped by 12·5 per cent., and the number of ancillary staff in local authority education services has fallen by 12 per cent.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: The reports are oblivious to the demands made by the public upon our local authorities when they have less money and manpower to respond to the services that the public demand.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman has argued his case as persuasively as he can about the problems of unemployment in Wales. Is he contending now from the Dispatch Box that the main generator of jobs in Wales will be the local authorities, which the ratepayers will have to pay for?

Mr. Jones: I will make my speech in my own way and the hon. Gentleman will understand my points more fully by the time that I have finished.

I was about to give an example of one of the services that have to be provided which are now very much at risk —education. I want to quote from a letter that I have received from a parent-teacher association and a headmaster:

"However, of late, in spite of careful spending of the School Capitation money, we find ourselves supplying such basic items as paper and stationery. Recently we have paid £600; part of £1,000 spent by the school to provide basic text books in English to the Junior Department. Is this trend likely to continue? If so, what of those schools who have no PTAs or other financial support?

The letters then states:

"This PTA objects strongly that they are having to provide basics in the school. Surely the right of every child is to be equipped with the basic tools for education?"

One of the results of the way in which the Secretary of State has managed local government finance since he came to office is that the vital services across the board in Wales are not delivering at the standard that parents and recipients require because they are starved of cash. Nothing that the right hon. Gentleman has said this evening will put that right.

I want to describe the position as the counties see it. Perhaps their greatest bone of contention is the decision to end recycling because, with negative marginal rates of grant, there is a likelihood that total grant claimed according to terms set out in the RSG report will add up to less than the total of block grant. For 1987-88, both Secretaries of State have legislated to empower them to withhold any underclaimed grant that might arise if authorities spend more than Government assumptions. They say that the proposal seems to be a return to the worst aspects of the target penalty system that the Secretary of State claimed to have abolished last year.

We now know that, because of what the right hon. Gentleman has introduced, the counties in Wales may well lose about £11 million to £12 million, but he has launched an attack on the very counties that are to lose heavily under his new dispensation; and worse, the formula for the distribution of grant still leaves all counties on negative marginal rates of grant, rising to 94p for South Glamorgan. Under the right hon. Gentleman's system, for every extra pound spent, 94p is taken away. That is a very harsh penalty. The Association of District Councils says that some districts' negative grant rates are much more severe. So it was wrong of the right hon. Gentleman to

launch his attack on those local authorities when what he proposes tonight is deeply injurious to the authorities that want to provide services to our people.

For the districts, I can best exemplify the problems faced by Swansea. The council has told me that for 1987-88 it has lost £522,000 — about a 4 per cent. reduction. It has had to put up the rates by 3p, or 7·5 per cent. Without the grant loss, its rate increase would have been just 1p, or 2·5 per cent. Surely there is the answer to the unpleasant approach that the Secretary of State adopted in his typically undignified manner in his speech.

The council in Swansea has been able to increase expenditure in cash terms by only 1·5 per cent., which, with a predicted inflation rate of 4·5 per cent. means real terms cuts. For example, it has had to use £1·2 million of prudently accumulated reserves, cut £3 million from the draft budget and cut £120,000 from job creation schemes run in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission. That is just one small example of the havoc that the right hon. Gentleman is playing with the budgets and objectives of our local authorities.

The district councils tell me that the Welsh districts' block grant has virtually stood still since last year, and has been reduced by £1·2 million when account is taken of the revisions in the supplementary rate support grant report for 1986-87. Furthermore, they tell me, in some anger, this year's settlement has reduced Welsh districts' block grant by £5·3 million, or 3·5 per cent., from the provisional settlement announced by the Secretary of State in July. Not only has this been a poor settlement for Welsh districts, but it has come as a severe blow, bearing in mind the detailed statements made by the Welsh Office and the Secretary of State last July of individual Welsh districts' GREs, block grant entitlements and published district rates.

The Secretary of State has made great play about rate increases, and has denounced them, but the districts tell me that they have managed to keep their rate increases under control only because they have made further cuts in services and costs to keep their own expenditure within the Government's stringent spending guidelines for the fifth year running and by their use of scarce and valuable reserves to reduce the cost to the ratepayer.

Therefore, the Secretary of State is wrong to launch this attack upon our local authorities. He referred to the supplementary report. I shall too, briefly. In the report the Secretary of State confirms the implementation of the full recycling of grants for 1986-87. So why did he cause so much uncertainty by threatening not to recycle grants? As legislation has had to be introduced to stop the recycling of grants in 1987-88, the right hon. Gentleman was clearly making not just an empty threat, but an illegal threat. That was a rather shabby moment in his tenure of office.

The districts have lost £1·3 million of block grant in the supplementary report for 1986-87. In rate poundage terms, the largest grant reductions are for Blaenau Gwent, with a block grant down by £160,000 — equivalent to a 3p rate — and Taff Ely, with a block grant down by £250,000 — equivalent to a 2·7p rate. Those are the consequences of the Secretary of State's policies.

To sum up, this is a complicated set of proposals, the system is too volatile, the districts are upset at the decrease in their block grants, the counties have exposed the iniquities of ending grant recycling, everybody in local government finance acknowledges that the system is overcomplicated, and all say that high negative marginal rates of grant create major difficulties. They are, in effect, penalties by another name.

Our people, communities and valleys need an increase in public investment in Wales to counteract the acknowledged economic and social deprivation. The settlement fails to give Welsh local authorities the opportunity to increase investment in their communities and improve the lives and livelihoods of their inhabitants.

We say that the settlement is no relaxation of the tough controls applied by the Government since 1981-82 on the spending of local authorities. In effect, the Secretary of State's proposal is a confidence trick and some Welsh councils may find it impossible to use the whole of their capital spending powers in the next year, because of his system and grant losses on marginal spending.

The Government have cut back harshly on the funding of our local authorities—by at least £672 million in real terms since 1978-79. That is the scale of the damage. At the same time, the government have been content to drive up unemployment, and thus our councils have been forced to do much more with much less. The Secretary of State has been a party to an unforgivable policy, and Wales will never forgive him for that.

Several Hon. Members rose——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. This is a short debate and brief speeches would be appropriate.

10.40 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Wales has once again fared very well under the rate support grant settlement announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It has fared substantially better than England, thanks to my right hon. Friend's powerful advocacy in Cabinet and, as he has said trenchantly, the settlement should result in low rate increases or rate reductions.

There is certainly no reason why Clwyd should be raising its precept yet again, even though the extremely generous pay settlement given to the teachers—despite the appalling behaviour of most of their union leaders throughout the dispute — creates problems for the treasurer. Those problems could have been resolved if Clwyd had not dithered about closing half-empty schools.

Within the rate support grant system the effect on districts is, as so often under an increasingly rickety system, unpredictable and sometimes seemingly unfair. The system is meant to ensure that decisions to increase spending should result in a reduction of RSG in most cases, and that a decision to reduce spending should result in considerable rating benefits. However, other factors are at work, applying grotesquely complicated formulae for assessing special elements, on top of an already complex system.

That has led to the situation in which Colwyn, hitherto a prudent spender, has had to increase its rate by no less than 26 per cent. from 38p to 48p. If I were making party political points — which I am not — I might establish some connection with the fact that this year the Liberals have a firm grip on the council, whereas previously they were merely the largest political group on the council. As such they have systematically cushioned the rate increases by running down the balances. This year, however, there are no balances to run down.

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

Much of the explanation for the sharp rise in Colwyn's rates lies in the random effect of the various special factors determining rate support grant. *[Interruption.]* The borough treasurer said in a letter to me:

"My members are totally bemused by the RSG system. They cannot understand that, for an authority which has kept to spending targets in the past, they are treated in this way. I find it difficult, if not impossible, to give a satisfactory answer. Them seem unimpressed with the explanation that the whole thing is a mathematical exercise"—

[Interruption.]

This debate is being rendered extremely difficult by a severe attack of verbal diarrhoea on the part of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who has consistently been muttering. It would make things much easier if he would shut up.

Mr. Stefan Terlezki (Cardiff, West): He is as green as Tom Jones's grass.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is too much sub-dialogue going on.

Sir Anthony Meyer: The treasurer goes on to say:

"They seem unimpressed with the explanation that the whole thing is a mathematical exercise, the formulae having been the subject of consultation with the local authorities associations. The whole thing appears to be a huge lottery, and the dice do not fall kindly for Colwyn."—

[Interruption.]

Colwyn has pointed out that this time the special needs element has operated rather more favourably for Rhuddlan. It should not be supposed that Rhuddlan is entirely happy. *[Interruption.]* It is concerned about the capital allocation for its housing improvement programme. Like every council, it would like a larger housing allocation. *[Interruption.]* Rhyl is suddenly becoming aware that it has a problem of alarming— *[Interruption.]* It really is extremely——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) should take account of what I said earlier. I hope that he will.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Perhaps a bucket of cold water would do the trick.

Rhyl is suddenly becoming aware that it has an alarming problem of deteriorating housing, analogous to that in some of the city centres. It needs a crash housing action programme, especially in the west end of the town, where deteriorating housing, mostly in multi-occupation, is interacting with poor social conditions, aggravated by the influx of jobless youngsters from Merseyside. Some rather frightening results have been produced.

This morning Colwyn council told the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs that it could use an extra £500,000 straight away. It said that it would have no problem in spending it wisely on housing improvement. No doubt Rhuddlan would like an equally ambitious expansion of its programme. The present worry is the Treasury insistence on year-end accounting. The council says that that makes it impossible for it to spend its full allocation in any given year. It says that the receipts from council house sales come in throughout the year in random fashion and that the proportion of the money from those council house sales that it may spend is liable to arbitrary variation by the Government, with little notice. Improvements grants authorised in one year may not be spent until the next. All this is a nightmare for the borough treasurer.

I am not surprised that Rhuddlan should resent reproaches levelled at it by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, who claim that it cannot need more money for housing as it is not spending its full allocation.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I must say that Rhuddlan has had an exceptionally generous settlement, because GRE is up by 10 per cent. due to the projects for regional and national importance capital allocations. It budgeted to spend 3·6 per cent. above that exceptionally generous settlement.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I was not maintaining that Rhuddlan had been particularly harshly treated. All I am saying is that it is extremely difficult for that council to plan ahead in view of the insistence that it must spend all its money by the end of the accounting year.

I do not suppose that we will have many more of these RSG debates, in which those of us who speak from the Back Benches are probably talking through our hats, while Ministers clearly know what they are talking about.

We are to have a new system. I have the gravest reservations about whether the community charge—excellent in principle—can possibly be made to bear the heavy load of expenditure that will be placed upon it. I also have grave doubts about the wisdom of eliminating domestic property tax. If a tax becomes unbearably heavy, that is not necessarily a good reason for sweeping it away altogether. It is an argument for shifting some of the burden that it creates.

10.54 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): The Secretary of State told us, and I am prepared to believe him, that Wales has done marginally better than local authorities in England in the allocation of rate support grant for 1987-88. It may even be true that this settlement is an improvement on those we have had in the recent past. Many of my parliamentary colleagues may disagree with me, but I am sure that the Secretary of State is a reasonable man. He has been obliged to listen to representatives of local authorities, whose first concern is providing services and value for money. Having said that, I can only come to the sad conclusion that, although the right hon. Gentleman may have listened, he has been unable to deliver the goods to the satisfaction of the authorities, and especially not to those who expect and deserve the services provided by them.

The overall effect is that, once again, the Government seem to be using the system as a means of curbing local authority expenditure, although the ratepayers invariably come out in favour of better, more efficient services.

The majority of county and district councils are suffering negative marginal grant rates, which means that, as expenditure increases, their grant entitlement is reduced. Ceredigion district council, although it has one of the lowest district rate levies in Wales at 19p this year, increasing to 21p for 1987-88, faces a penal negative marginal rate of grant of 79 per cent. Any growth in its budget means that, for every £100 spent, the grant will be cut by £79. It is manifestly unfair that high and low-spending authorities alike are penalised, and there are no rewards for being careful.

Ratepayers will be asked to fund all additional expenditure in full, and a relatively small increase in expenditure can result in a disproportionately large increase in the rate levy. The problem for the majority of district councils is that, over many years of cuts in public expenditure, they have had to pare back to the bone, and there is little, if any, flesh left to cut. The only way in which many authorities have survived recently is by using substantial sums from their reserves, but those reserves are fast disappearing, as are many essential services.

Many county councils are worried that, although the settlement in some measure takes account of past pay awards, it does not make enough provision to cope with pay settlements that are in the pipeline, at all levels, which are outside the authorities' control. Indeed, the restructuring of teachers' pay scales has not been catered for adequately.

The Tory Government have no sympathy for local government, and this exercise in cheeseparing, as demonstrated by the Welsh rate support grant report, shows that they have no interest in maintaining support for local services or in encouraging the growth of local democracy. They relate matters only to central control and manipulation.

However, the British electors have demonstrated many times during the past couple of years, and no doubt will do so again soon, that they want more local control and better and more efficient services, with vigorous local authorities directly answerable to the electorate, not controlled by puppetmasters in London.

In my view, electors want to see school buildings better maintained and educational facilities improved. They want to see rural roads in good repair, better transport, vastly improved housing, and extended social services. They want to see local government involved in building up the economy of the area, making more opportunities available for jobs and generally reacting to the needs of inhabitants. Instead, they have to watch the morale of local authorities drain away while they wrestle with impossible restrictions imposed by central Government. They have been asked to preside over shrinking and inadequate budgets while demands on resources grow remorselessly.

The time has come for a change in the attitude of central Government, and a realisation that local government matters and can contribute a great deal not only to the basic needs of the people it serves but to the health and democracy of the country.

I was surprised that the Secretary of State was critical of Dyfed county council. From my experience as one of the ratepayers in the county, I am well aware that the chief executive and the councillors—never mind which party they represent—have given their best for many years as members of the Dyfed county council. It is a great shame that the Secretary of State has singled out one of the best local authorities in Wales, which cares for those who live within our community.

11.1 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I shall begin my remarks by making a general point. Wales's share of total grant for England and Wales has steadily increased under the Government. It is a great tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, as the champion of Wales and the Welsh people, that although in the 1970s Wales's share of the total grant for England and Wales was 7·25 per cent., by 1981-82 it had risen to 7·4 per cent., and now in 1986-87 it stands at 8·3 per cent. In the coming year that will make a substantial difference of £142 million over comparable figures for the 1970s. Of course, there is also the increase in current expenditure of 4·8 per cent. above 1986-87 budgets in Wales—1 per cent. higher than in England. My right hon. Friend has been a doughty fighter for the Principality and its people. We shall greatly miss him when he retires.

Even the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), almost every time that Scottish business is moved on the Floor of the House, is inclined to grumble about how well my right hon. Friend is doing because of the way in which the differentials between Scotland and Wales are narrowing. I am sure that the one or two Scottish Members present can confirm that comment. That shows how well my right hon. Friend has done for Wales.

Even Clwyd county council has been kind. In the words of the county treasurer, Ralph Greening:

"This is not an unreasonable settlement. I am not unhappy about it."

Coming from Clwyd, that is the equivalent of at least six curtain calls at Covent Garden.

In the current year, the settlement has led to a lower than usual rate rise of 4·8 per cent. That is just as well when we remember that since 1984 county rates have risen from 148p to 198p. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State put it succinctly to the House on 23 July last year when he said:

"More than 50 per cent. of the rate income in Wales comes from non-domestic ratepayers. High and unpredictable rate rises are bad for business, hinder expansion and put jobs at risk." [*Official Report*, 23 July 1986; Vol.102, c. 341.]

This excellent settlement gives the opportunity to local authorities not only to pass on low, or relatively low, rate increases to ratepayers, but also to maintain services. Whether that opportunity is taken depends of course on the decisions of those local authorities.

I take Clwyd county council to task on that point. Too often empire building and castle converting have come before statutory services. I give three instances. The first is manpower. There is no single way more guaranteed to create unemployment in local industry than for local government to have a bloated staff. Just look at three departments in Clwyd county council. The Audit Commission profile for 1986-87 shows that the chief executive, legal and secretarial department is 128 per cent. larger than the average for the family of directly comparable authorities. The engineering department is 112 per cent. larger. The architectural department is 82 per cent. larger.

The chief executive of Clywd county council, Mr. Mervyn Phillips, has described the Audit Commission profiles as "worthless", yet the Hay-MSL report on the opportunities for economy in the services and structure of Clwyd county council has confirmed that the Audit Commission is hitting the right targets in regard to overmanning at shire hall. It indicted Clwyd county council as "top heavy" with senior administratives—with too many chiefs in relation to Indians. The figures I have given highlight that indictment.

The second instance is surplus places. The current number of surplus school places in Clwyd is absurdly large, standing at 22,300. That figure is made up of 11,700 at primary level and 10,600 at secondary level. The cost of keeping them empty is about £3·5 million a year—the

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

equivalent of 6p or 7p on the rates. Just meeting the Government target of removing two fifths of those places would produce substantial revenue savings that could be redeployed with great advantage elsewhere. They could be spent on the school library stock, which in 1984-85 was slashed from £75,000 to £15,000, on school building maintenance, which last year was cut by £11,000, and on providing further resources for the GCSE.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that in his view it is Government policy that village schools and small high schools should be closed, that children should be bussed over enormous distances and that the whole fabric and tradition of Welsh education should be dismembered, just to save a bit of money and justify this rotten rate support grant settlement?

Mr. Raffan: The hon. and learned Gentleman made an exactly identical intervention during the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in last year's debate. He was humiliated by my right hon. Friend, for the simple reason that it is hypocritical of the Liberal party to call for money to be spent on empty school places and at the same time to say that more money should be spent on library books, capitation and the GCSE. If the hon. and learned Gentleman thinks that he fools even some people some of the time, I have to tell him that he does not. It was a silly intervention. He has repeated last year's intervention when he was so effectively put down by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: I shall certainly not give way.

Mr. Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Raffan: No, I shall not give way. I should have thought that one humiliation for the hon. and learned Gentleman would be enough.

Mr. Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Raffan: I have been saying for a long time that Clwyd has not been removing surplus school places fast enough. I am glad to have the support of the chairman of Clwyd's policy, finance and resources committee, Councillor Rhys Webb. Earlier this month he issued a statement in which he said:

"It is not going as quickly as I would like."

Thirdly, I refer to major capital projects, projects which have nothing to do with statutory obligations. I speak principally of Bodelwyddan castle. Even after having set aside the massive capital expenditure so far of £1,799,000 and the £1,350,000 that is to be spent in the current year, the revenue implications of the project are horrendous. The annual running costs now amount to a massive £545,000 a year, with offsetting income at a mere £11,000. How can such expenditure possibly be justified when, since 1984, the school library stock budget has been slashed? In 1984-85 it stood at £75,000 in Clwyd. In 1985-86 it was slashed to £15,000, and it has stood at that figure ever since. This year an additional £18,000 will be made available exclusively for the GCSE, although that figure has been whittled down from an original £60,000.

The truth is that statutory services and obligations are suffering severely to pay for the Bodelwyddan castle project. That is wrong. Indeed, it is worse than wrong. In the words of several anxious parents to whom I spoke yesterday, when they were lobbying me in the House, "it is wicked".

At primary level, project-based work has been undermined because books can be borrowed for only a month rather than a full term as before. Non-fiction was bought for primary level for the first time in 18 months last month. The schools library service has had to abandon its support for the prepared reading schemes because the service is not buying fiction in sufficient quantities.

At secondary level, a survy has shown a totally inadequate and deteriorating library stock. Indeed, many schools that I have visited cannot afford a decent newspaper, let alone a decent weekly magazine.

In February 1986 Clwyd's Education (Schools and Special Services) Sub-committee adopted the LISC report —"School Libraries—Foundation of the Curriculum"— but only lip service has been paid to it ever since. Some 12 months on, the report to that sub-committee reported a further deterioration in the school library stock. This is the truth——

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that at the start of the debate you asked hon. Members to restrict their remarks to a reasonable time because so many hon. Members wished to speak? Will you confirm that the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) has spoken for eight minutes——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but he is taking up valuable time. It is not a point of order, but it is a matter of concern. I hope that the hon. Member for Delyn will recognise that a number of hon. Members are seeking to take part in the debate.

Mr. Raffan: I would have been a great deal quicker if I had not been subjected to the continual heckling of Opposition Members, and the pointless interventions of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

There has been a scandalous neglect of statutory services to pay for the Bodelwyddan castle project, which the county cannot afford. I am glad that my concern about the county's cock-eyed priorities is shared by members of all political parties. It is a tragedy when so much fine work is being done by individual departments at Clwyd—by the education department under its director, Mr. Keith Evans, the social services department under its director Mr. Gledwyn Jones, and the finance department under the county treasurer, Mr. Ralph Greening. Such fine work and service are being given, but the ability to give a better service is being undermined by projects such a Bodelwyddan. The budget for the school library stock could be doubled, trebled, quadrupled, or more, out of the running costs of Bodelwyddan, and it should be.

I and many others will continue to speak out as often and as loudly as we can until what we say is not only heard but acted on, until Clwyd county council not only reflects but acts upon the views of the people it purports to but does not represent.

Lastly, I turn to the speech of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). The best comment on it, on Labour's position—I shall continue to repeat that until Opposition Members listen—comes not from me but from the people of Clwyd—indeed, from the people in

the hon. Gentleman's own constituency. At county council by-elections last Thursday the Conservatives gained Hope, Penyffordd and Caergwrle from Labour. Labour sank from first to third place—and in Buckley Labour only just held on humiliatingly by the skin of its teeth. The hon. Gentleman's speech will not win any seats from us. I doubt whether it will even save his own.

11.9 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): This has been a remarkable mini debate. We have had the usual froth and bluster from the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), and we have had the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir. A. Meyer) rallying to the cause of the Government, which is a sure sign of the approach of an election. We have had the Secretary of State providing a remarkable swansong to these rate support grant debates. One would hope that the right hon. Gentleman would have a certain humility as he surveys the wreckage of Wales around him. As he sinks beneath the waves one would hope that there would at least been the cry from him,

"I have sinned; I have been wrong."

but he is still a true monetarist, and that false dogma is shown to be wholly inappropriate to Wales.

Many of the criticisms that we may have made of the Budget are equally applicable to the RSG settlement. In 1979 the Government claimed that they would institute a regime of tax cuts and protect the ratepayer, but there has been an increase in the burden of taxation on the ordinary family, and there has been an increase in the rate burden. This has been the direct result of Government policy. We know that the Government have reduced the percentage of relevant expenditure that is covered by the Exchequer. In 1981-82, the first year of the disaggregation of the England and Wales figures, the Exchequer provided 62·7 per cent. of expenditure. This has been reduced to 53·5 per cent. in the current settlement.

The Welsh ratepayer pays a water rate, and by failing to tackle the high water rates in Wales the Welsh Office has failed the Welsh nation. In 1982-83 the differential in domestic rate relief that was intended to reflect the higher level of water rates in Wales was abolished. I should say that the domestic rate relief was halved from 36p to 18·5p. The increased burden fell directly on the consumer in Wales. On the best comparable basis, the Welsh water rate is about two thirds above the average of the other authorities in England and Wales. The Government have done nothing to carry over the interim settlement which the previous Labour Government bequeathed to them with their equalisation legislation. They seem content that the Welsh people should bear an excessive and unjust water rate burden.

I shall not weary the House with the effects of the Government's policy on the Swansea council, as this has already been touched upon by my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). The reduction in central Government money would have meant a rate increase of 4 per cent. in cash terms. We know that positive Government policies could have led to increased potential for job creation by local authorities, but the Government have prevented the authorities from playing a full role at local level. At a time of mounting social problems of unemployment and homelessness, the Government have chosen to restrict expenditure.

Even with the greatest fantasy of the Conservative press, the Government cannot claim that they are dealing with loony authorities. Swansea council and other authorities in Wales are highly responsible and dedicated to the welfare of those whom they represent. The Secretary of State has frequently paid tribute to the Swansea city council for working closely with central Government and seeking to stimulate private investment in the marina project in the enterprise zone.

The settlement and the constant turning of the screw upon Welsh local authorities reflect the prejudices and bombast of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and that of the Welsh Office, and the continuing trend of denying the local authorities the support that they need to do the job for which they are equipped and are anxious to carry out.

11.18 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): We have seen worse rate support grant settlements than the one that is before us, but that says more about previous settlements than about the current one. The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) has spoken of the way in which services that are needed by our communities are being restricted, and that is the major problem.

The humbug that we have from central Government gets up the nostrils of those who are engaged in local government more than anything else. Central Government have screwed down local government and have taken powers to the centre. They then tell local government that there should be no rate increases in their areas. The Government have told Gwynedd that, if expenditure can be held down to 4·8 per cent., there should be no rate increase. The Government knew, however, that the pressure on expenditure in the county was so high that there would be an increase in the rate of 7p to 8p on account of the teachers' settlement alone, and a 2p or 3p increase on account of road repairs. The costs of road repairs have been borne by capital account instead of revenue account because of the desperation of those who were responsible for the authority's funds. The impact of the police settlement is another element coming through, yet Gwynedd is castigated.

In the context of Dyfed, which the Secretary of State mentioned rather than Gwynedd, he said that no manufacturing industry jobs were coming to Dyfed because we had increased the rates. Gwynedd has had the lowest rate in Wales in recent years, but no jobs are coming to Gwynedd. It is little wonder that local authorities are becoming desperate and saying that, if jobs are not coming in the private sector, we should try to create them as directly as we can, particularly in view of the pressure on services in the county.

I draw the Secretary of State's attention to the increasing problems of maintaining the highways in rural counties. This is largely on account of the Government's decision to go for heavier axle weights on lorries. The pressure on bridges and roads is enormous and is leading to inevitable increases in expenditure on rural roads in the counties of Gwynedd, Dyfed and Powys. Of course, it has also led to increased expenditure on roads in urban areas.

There is also increased pressure on the social services because of the mushroomlike growth of private nursing homes and private residential homes in our counties. That inevitably leads to a demand for services. Gwynedd is facing an increase of 15p in its rates this year, and that still leaves the county £1 million below its GRE. The Secretary

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

of State has a habit of castigating counties for spending less than the GRE because they are increasing rates in order to maintain services on which there is great pressure.

Although this year's capital grant has been better than in previous years and has the smack of an election about it, one of the most difficult and frustrating matters is the lack of certainty about the future. It is not enough to say that 80 per cent. of a certain figure can be guaranteed next year. When the figure is worked out, it shows that, of the £10 million for capital expenditure in Gwynedd in the coming year, in practice there is a guarantee of only about £5·4 million. We need a rolling capital programme for several years and much greater certainty if we are to have a pattern for our capital expenditure.

Finally, I should like to deal with the rate support grant formula. The Green Paper contains suggestions about further simplification. The formula for England is considerably more complex than that for Wales and, if the formula is over-simplified, there will be a danger that some of the necessary variations that are needed from area to area in Wales because of the diverse nature of our country will be lost. I hope that, when simplification is considered, the diverse nature of Wales will be taken into account, and that sensitivity will be maintained to ensure that the rural counties and the areas of great social deprivation in the valleys will be properly catered for in the rate support grant settlement.

The Government should not play with figures to try to justify what they are doing this year compared to last. We need to look at the needs of our areas and compare those needs with the services that we get. We ought to have a radical new think on how we can improve those services, and we should get the finance to do so.

11.24 pm

Mr. Ian Grist (Cardiff, Central): The plea by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) precludes looking at the economy as a whole. Unless we get the economy right, we will not have the money to fund the things he wants. That is part and parcel of these rate settlements. I say that because I think that people sometimes lose sight of it.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the work that he is doing. I say that for what seems like the umpteenth year, and I am sure it seems like that to my right hon. Friend. As my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said, we shall miss him in future rate support grant debates.

I should like to take up a point that my right hon. Friend made about south Glamorgan. In the settlement, south Glamorgan was given a chance to reduce its rate. It did not reduce it but chose to put it up. In the six years that the Labour party has controlled that county, the rate has gone up by 80 per cent., including at one time a supplementary rate. The action of Cardiff city council has been rather different. It is a Conservative council and, despite the change from the provisional figures last year and the eventual outturn weighing against that council, it managed to reduce the rates. After four years in office, the council is still levying the same rate poundage that it levied when it came to power. That is a responsible attitude by a responsible council which is promoting the most exciting city in the country, with major capital investment and the forward-looking Cardiff bay development just coming off the blocks.

I regret to say that the populist approach of the Liberal party, confirming yet again that it is angling for any old vote that it can find, shows that it is clear that it will not have to operate power, and so can make promises where it will. Like all the Opposition parties, it wants higher public expenditure, although I do not know where it thinks that that will come from. It comes from taxation, rates, businesses and people's pockets. The whole point of this debate and all the similar ones is to control local authority expenditure, inflation and borrowing, and to bring down interest rates. The recent fall in interest rates will bring great advantage and benefit to local authorities. If he can, I would like my right hon. Friend to estimate what the fall in interest rates is worth to Welsh local authorities, and the leeway that that gives our treasurers.

Cardiff city council has managed to put down its rates while not cutting expenditure in any department, or any service, contrary to what the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) said. Promoting industry and jobs in Wales depends on keeping costs down and making our local authorities and cities and towns more attractive to incoming industry, and able to help established businesses to grow. High rates and taxes are inimical to that, and the Government and the Conservative party are doing all that they can to bring jobs and industry to Wales. They are making a first-rate job of it.

11.26 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I cannot understand why, from the Government Benches, we have had lots of statistics and figures about how Welsh local government is doing well and spending more money than ever before, when in Wales one can see the infrastructure deteriorating in front of one's eyes. They have said that local government expenditure is going up, but they have not said that it is going up in line with central Government expenditure, because that has been increasing even more. The Secretary of State said that local government was spending more in real terms. I have not studied these matters closely over the past two or three years, but I wonder whether that is because housing benefit is included, or the Clegg award, made by the last Labour Government. I should be interested to see what local government has to say about the Secretary of State's speech.

The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) said that RSG in Wales is better than that in England. That may be so, but, in a world of diminishing resources, RSG as a proportion of total spending has been cut severely. It is not enough to make a simple proportional comparison and say that the Secretary of State has done well. I suspect that council expenditure in England has been extremely severely pruned, and both Secretaries of State have done badly. I would prefer to put it in this way: the Secretary of State for Wales has done less badly than the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Why do we have all these figures? It is simply because the facts do not bear out any justification given by Ministers. In Wales one can see that everything is deteriorating. The roads in urban areas are full of potholes, when they were not seven years ago. One can see many people with nothing to do, standing around listlessly

on pavements because they do not have a job. The social services are creaking under the strain, with old people being shunted out into the community simply because the Government want to save money.

Housing lists in Wales are increasing. Councils cannot afford to build new houses or do up council houses. I know that, and I think that every Opposition Member knows that. The facts belie what the Government are trying to put across in their figures and misrepresentations.

We should look at education. I agree with the hon. Member for Delyn: hon. Members should look at the report on the state of school books in Clwyd. Clwyd is a rotten council and it has got its priorities wrong. One should look at the staffing, the low morale, the lack of teachers and the extremely bad service we get in education throughout the Principality because of the policies of the Government.

Will this be the last statement we have from the present Secretary of State? I hope so. We have had centralising Government over the past seven years and it is time that we had a change.

11.30 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): This is yet another debate on rate support grant. Contrary to what the Secretary of State has told us, the concern and resentment of our local authorities is as great as ever. They feel that over the years they have suffered from the diktat of central Government. Their argument now, essentially, is that the cumulative effect of decision-making by the Government has left its mark.

Ratepayers in Wales have certainly felt the impact of the reduction in taxpayers' contribution to local government services, as my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) so clearly pointed out. In line with that trend, the Government have increased the proportion of specific grants as opposed to block grants. That increases central Government influence and correspondingly diminishes local control. That is a far cry from the days when the Conservative party argued that local decisions should be taken locally.

From a constituency standpoint, Gwent county council has announced that it proposes to increase the rate in the county by 11 per cent. It blames the teachers' pay award and cuts in Government grants. I appreciate that Gwent has budgeted for the full Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service pay award. It argues that ACAS provides for extra supply teachers, whereas the Secretary of State for Education and Science's package does not. Gwent has also made provision for modest improvements in services — 50 extra police officers, a bit of extra provision for the elderly, the disabled and children in need. There is also £750,000 allocated for the new GCSE examination system. That is a worthwhile and necessary provision.

There is nothing revolutionary about Gwent's proposals; they are examples of ordinary run-of-the-mill decision-making. What is more, before any final decisions were taken, there was wide consultation, particularly with Conservative opposition. Then, in the more formal council proceedings, there was all-party support for the proposals. Surely that is a model of how local government should function. It certainly does not need the interference of junior Ministers to tell such experienced public representatives how they should carry on their business.

The district councils cannot make rhyme nor reason of the settlement — and, I should add, not without just cause. For example, relevant expenditure increased by over 8 per cent. yet the block grant to district councils has increased by less than 1 per cent. over the 1986-87 settlement level. They are concerned about the volatility that the settlement brings about. It can result in rates varying between an increase of 20 per cent. and a reduction of 10 per cent. The Welsh District Councils Association claims that the severity of the settlement makes it difficult to maintain existing service levels.

The entire thrust of the Government's policy is to move tax from central Government to the local community. The difficulty is that in Wales there are fewer people with high incomes, so the burden on the local community is even greater. To paraphrase Professor Galbraith's famous words, we have the public squalor but not a lot of the private affluence. Meanwhile, our local authorities strive manfully to maintain services.

The local authorities in my area have acted responsibly throughout. However, despite their efforts—our councils would be the first to admit it — Wales has become a shabby society. That is detrimental to its interests in every way. What has happened is no accident; it is directly due to the Government's doctrinaire approach to the public sector of the economy. There is now a need for a fundamental change in approach and attitude. We need a general election before we can bring about those changes.

11.35 pm

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The phrase used by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) was echoed by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) at greater length. However, the hon. Member for Wrexham did not say that in Wrexham there were two priority estates programmes making a major reformation of formerly rundown local authority housing, that there has been massive restructuring of old industrial premises, a huge number of new industrial projects, a large road programme going on all around Wrexham and a new hospital. He did not mention any of those striking improvements in Wrexham.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) made an eloquent speech in favour of high rate burdens. In a thoroughly bad-tempered intervention the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) argued for educational waste and inefficiency.

The debate started with a tear-jerking piece of charlatanism from the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). He said that the Government had destabilised the local government scene in Wales. That is not the view of Mr. Richard Tettenborn, the financial adviser of the Welsh Counties Committee who wrote of the absence of the extremes of political polarisation and of spending patterns.

"it is pleasant to be able to report that consultation is alive and well and happening in Wales."

He also said that the settlement is a significant improvement on some of its predecessors — *[Interruption.]* I am told that I am being selective. I accept the verdict that this is not a giveaway. I never suggested that it was. However, it is a good settlement and the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside should acknowledge that.

For some peculiar reason, the hon. Gentleman gave us the unemployment figures for 1985 and stopped there. I

[Mr. Nicholas Edwards]

wonder why? Clearly he did not wish to refer to the fact that, since the early part of 1986, Welsh unemployment has fallen faster than that in any other part of the United Kingdom. It has fallen for 10 out of the past 11 months, and for nine consecutive months, by a further 15,000 from its peak. The truth is that the hon. Gentleman so hates to have good news about unemployment that he has tried to stop the clock in 1985. That reveals the hypocrisy of the hon. Gentleman and the fact that he is not in the least concerned about unemployment or the welfare of the people of Wales. He is concerned only about his shallow shabby political ambition.

Mr. Barry Jones *rose—*

Mr. Edwards: No, I shall not give way. I shall not give way to a man who has revealed his contempt for the Welsh people—*[Interruption.]* I have no intention of giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jones *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Edwards: I have nothing but contempt for the contribution made by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside who wished me to give way to him. The truth is that the hon. Gentleman does not care about the unemployed; he cares only about his political skin. That truth has been revealed to the Welsh people tonight.

Mr. Jones: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman referred to the lack of basic tools of education but failed to say that more is being spent on education in Wales than under the Labour Government, despite the substantial reduction in the number of schoolchildren. He refused to acknowledge that the failure to tackle the problem of 150,000 surplus places in schools results in a lack of resources for his priorities. That is what local government should be tackling at present.

The hon. Gentleman referred to this as a poor settlement for the districts. It is not, which is why districts have been able to maintain their services, certainly at the level they had when the Government came to office. The increase in the rate support grant this year of 7·5 per cent., including specific grant, has allowed the districts to budget in line with the settlement and to increase average rates by less than 2p. The fact that so many districts in Wales have succeeded in reducing rate burdens and offsetting the rate increases imposed by the counties shows that it is a reasonable and a good settlement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) attacked the present system. I remind him, as I have done on previous occasions, that he also refused to consider the proposed change in the system. It is not good enough for him to attack the present system for being unworkable, to refuse to produce an alternative and to attack the Government's proposals for reform. In an intervention, I referred to the settlement in Rhuddlan. In Colwyn, the council has chosen to increase expenditure by 8·4 per cent., or 3·8 per cent. above the settlement level. As a result, it forfeited £104,000 of block grant. Its expenditure is now 8 per cent. above GRE, so it is hardly surprising that there is a large poundage increase.

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Edwards: No. I wish to reply to the debate and to the excellent speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) who referred to a rate increase by Clwyd of 4·8 per cent.

It was a poundage increase of 4·8 per cent., when on the basis of the settlement there could have been a reduction. That will produce a 5·5 per cent. increase in the poundage rate. I am glad to say that, thanks to the good performance again by the Delyn district authority, the rate burden for his constituents will be reduced, so that the increase will be only 4·9 per cent. in Delyn. That is an absolutely splendid example of an authority which is doing an outstanding job of providing services while running one of the best enterprise zones, yet can reduce the rate burden. That proves conclusively the nonsense of the argument that rate burdens must be increased to improve services.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) asked for a radical new look at local government finance and said that, in considering the system of allocation, we should take particular careful——

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Edwards: No. I shall answer the hon. Gentleman who had a serious point to make.

Mr. Jones *rose——*

Mr. Edwards: I have no intention of giving way to the hon. Gentleman—not after the speech he delivered.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon made, as he often does, a serious point about allocations to local authorities. Obviously, we shall take careful account of the varied needs of Welsh local authorities and we shall not make a change unless it is necessary. He asked for a radical new look at local government finance. I can promise him that, in the first Session of a Parliament after a general election, the next Conservative Government will introduce a radical reform Bill to put local government finance on a sounder basis and to remove the unfair burdens that this complex system has introduced. I am happy to give that pledge to the hon. Member for Caernarfon.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 294, Noes 157.

Division No. 126] **[11.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Maclariane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald

Freud, Clement	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
George, Bruce	Nellist, David
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Godman, Dr Norman	O'Brien, William
Golding, Mrs Llin	O'Neill, Martin
Gould, Bryan	Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*	Park, George
Hancock, Michael	Patchett, Terry
Hardy, Peter	Pendry, Tom
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter	Pike, Peter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith	Raynsford, Nick
Haynes, Frank	Redmond, Martin
Heffer, Eric S.	Richardson, Ms Jo
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Robertson, George
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*	Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Home Robertson, John	Rooker, J. W.
Howells, Geraint	Rowlands, Ted
Hoyle, Douglas	Sedgemore, Brian
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*	Sheerman, Barry
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*	Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*	Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Janner, Hon Greville	Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
John, Brynmor	Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*	Skinner, Dennis
Lambie, David	Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Lamond, James	Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*	Soley, Clive
Litherland, Robert	Spearing, Nigel
Livsey, Richard	Stoll, Roger
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*	Strang, Gavin
Lofthouse, Geoffrey	Straw, Jack
Loyden, Edward	Taylor, Matthew
McDonald, Dr Oonagh	Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor	Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
McTaggart, Robert	Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Madden, Max	Tinn, James
Marek, Dr John	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*	Welsh, Michael
Martin, Michael	Wigley, Dafydd
Maxton, John	Williams, Rt Hon A.
Maynard, Miss Joan	Winnick, David
Meacher, Michael	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Meadowcroft, Michael	
Michie, William	Tellers for the Noes:
Mikardo, Ian	Mr. Allen McKay and
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce	Mr. John McWilliam.
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1987-88 (House of Commons Paper No. 221), which was laid before this House on 19th March, be approved.

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 222), which was laid before this House on 19th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Scottish Standing Committee.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Leicester Royal Infirmary

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

11.58 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): On 4 December last my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and I had the pleasure of detaining our hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security on a debate on the Trent regional health authority. Tonight my topic is much more specific—the funding of the Leicester royal infirmary in my constituency. Like everyone else in Leicester, I shall refer to it as the Royal.

My plea is for more money to secure the upgrading of some archaic wards which have the reputation as being among the worst in the country. My plea is backed by my hon. Friends in the city and county. I am pleased to see that I have their support in massed ranks and that my hon. Friends the Members for Harborough, for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) are present. I am grateful for their support.

My plea is also supported by the physicians' group at the Royal and by the "Fair share for health" campaign of the *Leicester Mercury*, which, under the executive editor, Laurie Simpkin, has done such a splendid service in highlighting the deficiencies in these wards.

The problem that I wish to draw to the attention of the House is within limited bounds. It involves five acute medical wards and, to put the matter shortly, there is not enough money to bring those five wards up to the modern standards that are exhibited in the rest of the hospital. These wards represent a small minority of the hospital, but the high standards elsewhere throw them into stark relief. I have had the opportunity of seeing what the conditions in those wards are like, because on Friday 13 February I was shown round by Dr. Frank Nichol, chairman of the Royal's physicians group, and his colleagues, to whom I express my thanks. To put it in a nutshell, the wards present a dismal sight. There are insufficient bathrooms, too few lavatories, inadequate space and poor access. One ward has a wooden mobile ramp for access, which has to be moved.

It is especially sad to me, with a daughter who has worked as a nurse for a number of years in the National Health Service, to see how her colleagues must care for patients in what can only be described as squalid Victorian conditions. I believe that my opinion of those wards is shared by my hon. Friends who are in the Chamber. They have taken the opportunity to see the conditions for themselves.

I shall flesh out my remarks with a few details about the five wards in question. St. Agnes ward has one lavatory and an old sink. Where I come from it is called a slopstone. I thought that they had passed into history, but apparently one or two have been preserved for posterity. In St. Margaret's ward there is a tiny lavatory and an old bath. Both those wards appear to have had no work done on them for a long time. The three other wards have had some recent cosmetic improvements made to them, but they are still well below par. Oliver ward has only three lavatories for a considerable number of patients. Marriott ward—it will loom large in my speech—has two toilets for 34 men. The modest improvements that have been carried out

recently have been paid for by a trust fund that was set up for the benefit of patients, not for the purpose of structural repairs. Fielding Johnson ward has 34 patients—there should only be 28—and a day room is being used for beds. Those five acute medical wards are desperately in need of further upgrading.

The problem must be seen in context—our wretched inheritance from the Labour Government and their policy of hospital building cuts. In 1974 those wards were unacceptable, and they were even more unacceptable when the Labour Government left office in 1979. It is sheer cant, humbug and hypocrisy on the part of the Opposition parties, aided and abetted by their friends in the trade union movement, to complain about Government policies or the National Health Service. Those parties, acting together, did much to damage the NHS. If they had any sensitivity, they would maintain a shamefaced silence.

In the city and the county we are being subjected to the cynical cry of cuts in services, but in truth there has been an unprecedented growth in the Leicestershire health authority and especially the Royal. That growth has taken place since we took office in 1979. The funding of the Royal has gone up from £11·5 million in 1977-78 to £39 million in 1985-86. The Leicestershire health authority has experienced a real growth in revenue funding of 34 per cent. from 1978-79 to 1986-87.

I shall say a few words about the history of the hospital. The Royal is an ancient and important hospital. It was founded in 1771. It is by far the largest hospital in the county, and it is an important teaching hospital for the university medical school—a school of increasing repute. Leicestershire health authority is the largest authority in the country, serving an area with a population of about 800,000, some of whom receive treatment at the Royal. The scale of the operation was brought home to me in striking detail when I visited the headquarters of the ambulance service at Carlton Hayes and saw the computerised service and the logistical problems and complexities that must be confronted by a health authority of that size and diversity.

May I pencil in some of the more recent background. It is a cause for pride, not for grumbling. My hon. Friend the Minister had the opportunity of seeing Glenfield hospital. A hospice has been opened by LOROS. Both facilities set fine examples for others to follow, and the Royal has also had great success. Between 1980 and 1986, in-patient work load increased by 22 per cent., day cases by 50 per cent., out-patients by 14 per cent. and maternity services by 8 per cent. Using a slightly different time scale, there has been an increase from 29,000 in-patients in 1977-78 to 45,000 in 1985-86. That has been accompanied by an increase in medical staff.

Those increased services have been delivered with more efficiency. The cost per case throws up interesting comparisons with the region and with national criteria. At the Royal the cost per case is £618. In the Trent region the average cost is £686, and the national average is £724. In-patient throughput based on annual discharge per bed shows the same favourable picture. In the Royal it is 54, in the Trent region it is only 50, and nationally it is only 47. We have had very cost-effective growth at the Royal. It is a busy, efficient hospital, and there has been good housekeeping. I am sure that my hon. Friends who represent the city and county agree that we should pay tribute to the doctors, nurses and staff at all levels. The people of the city and county are profoundly grateful to them. A price has had to be paid for that success, just as successful businesses sometimes have to pay a price and require additional injections of cash to cope with and promote their success.

Having sketched in some of the recent background, I should look to the foreground before considering the specific problem of the five wards. We expect that in the not too distant future phase 4 will be completed. When it is, it will provide a considerable increase in the number of acute beds, and we all welcome it. At least £18 million will be spent on it. Formal approval was given for the project on 22 March 1985, and it is estimated that work will begin on the site in September this year. On an optimistic estimate, it will be open in the spring of 1991. It will provide 360 general acute beds and 96 acute geriatric beds. But a blind spot has occurred between planning in the recent past and planning in the near future. This has caused the unfortunate situation in regard to the five acute medical wards of which I have spoken.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to the chronology of the events that relate to the five wards. As long ago as 1982 there were plans to upgrade the Marriott ward. They were delayed through lack of funds and put back to the mid-summer of 1983. In mid-summer 1983 they were postponed again, but in January 1984, as a result of savings from the re-siting of the children's wards, it appeared that funds would be available and hopes were raised. In June 1984 the district management team agreed that £100,000 could be spent on upgrading Marriott ward and said that work would be likely to start in 1985-86. In March 1985 the news was even better. The sum that was apparently to be available was £250,000, and that was apparently confirmed by the unit administrator. Consultant architects were brought in and plans were drawn up, and in September 1985 the plans were agreed.

In October 1985, however, a bitter blow fell. The new unit general manager informed the physicians group that, sadly, the money that was thought to be available was not available. All that has happened since then is that some minor cosmetic improvements have been carried out to Marriott ward, and something similar will be done to Spreece ward. The promised upgrading of the wards, which looked likely to come to fruition not long after 1982, has progressively retreated like a mirror. There has been promise and there has been retraction. That state of affairs, understandably, has not only undermined the morale of the staff, but has dismayed the public at large and caused widespread disappointment, which we, as hon. Members for the city and county, strongly share.

With that background of facts, I come to the argument itself. Looking on the bright side, it will be about four years before phase 4 comes into operation. In view of the history of delay of phase 4 and of other projects at the Royal, it is feared that the additional beds will not be available in the spring of 1991, as is now being promised. The reason for that fear is that phase 4 has not yet even been put out to tender. Therefore, it is thought to be unlikely that, with such a large scheme, work can begin on site in September of this year as had originally been envisaged.

Even when phase 4 is completed, because of the ever-increasing demands upon the facilities at the Royal, it is likely that the wards will still be needed. Therefore, the argument that they have a short life in front of them and

[Mr. Derek Spencer]

all that is required is some temporary tarting up to eke out the remainder of their existence seems not likely to be borne out by events.

How pleased we would be if these wards were to follow into history the great string of other unsuitable premises that we inherited from the last Labour Government. We take pride in having closed them and replaced them with modern and much more suitable facilities. However, that will happen only if sufficient funds are made available. These buildings are sound and, with appropriate upgrading, could provide facilities well into the next century. But more cash is required if those urgent, long-term improvements are to be made.

I turn to the real burden of my request to my hon. Friend the Minister. It is also made on behalf of my hon. Friends with neighbouring constituencies who are here tonight. The Royal has been a victim of its own success. It faces other problems, which I could have dwelt on tonight, but as time is limited I have limited my remarks to these five acute wards. They are a sample of a somewhat wider problem. We are convinced that, although the present level of funding, based on the resource allocation working party, has been vastly increased, it is not good enough. We are aware that RAWP is being re-examined, but some people fear that the shrill battalions from London and the home counties will succeed in persuading the Government that they should have a greater share. We shall resist that attempt most strenuously. We are not prepared to see that happen. The Royal is suffering from underfunding, and I am here tonight to ask my hon. Friend, on behalf of the Government, urgently to do something to put it right.

12.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): In the 10 minutes that are left to me I shall endeavour to answer some of the detailed points that have been made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer). I congratulate him on his success in Mr. Speaker's ballot for this Adjournment debate. This is the twentieth time, so far, that I have responded to an Adjournment debate, and it is the second occasion on which I have faced the formidable ordeal of addressing those of my hon. Friends representing Leicestershire constituencies, who are ranked behind me in considerable numbers. It is such a pity that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) has seen fit to find something else to do tonight, despite his occasional professed interest in the health of his constituents.

Health funding in Leicester has undoubtedly been a matter of considerable local interest for many years. I join my hon. and learned Friend in congratulating the *Leicester Mercury* on its campaign over many years, for the result has been a change in the whole system of funding and in a reallocation of resources throughout the country, as my hon. and learned Friend described. The efforts of the *Leicester Mercury* and of my hon. Friends in Leicestershire have led to a dramatic improvement in health services, particularly during the lifetime of this Government.

The Trent region is a major growth region. It also serves my constituency of Derbyshire, South. Spending in Trent has risen by 27 per cent., compared with the average for England of about 19 per cent., between 1978-79 and 1986-87. That is the highest increase in the country. In 1978-79 the Trent region was 8 per cent. below its target. Now it is about 3 per cent. below its target. That shows the Government's commitments to the hitherto rather less well funded regions. The benefits are then passed on to the districts.

As for capital, of the 14 regions, Trent has received the third highest capital allocation in England, after the west midlands and the north-west. Some £58·7 million will be spent on capital projects in 1987-88. That has increased Trent's share of the capital programme substantially.

I have taken the points that my hon. and learned Friend made about London, and it is worth reflecting that London still has twice as many acute beds for its population as does the rest of the country.

A large number of new building projects are under way. In Trent, £80 million of new building projects are due to be started in the current year, while 21 large projects at a total cost of £125 million are under construction or have recently been completed. On 4 April I shall be visiting one of the most recent of those, the new development at the Derby city hospital in Mickleover, which is mainly staffed by my constituents, who are serving it very well.

Money has been spent in Trent region on a 32 per cent. increase in doctors and dentists in 1985 compared with 1978. That is nearly 900 more doctors and dentists. Our constituents were neglected by the last Labour Government. That is one of the most substantial increases that has been reported around the country.

The Leicestershire health authority, which is responsible for Leicester royal infirmary, is a major teaching district. Its funding in 1982-83, when its boundaries were first established, was £118 million. This year we will be spending £154 million, and as a result it is within 4 per cent. of RAWP. In real terms it has experienced a growth of 34 per cent. since the Government took office. Ten years ago it was perhaps 20 per cent. below what we now call the RAWP target, but it is on schedule to meet its target by 1994. Therefore, the result is much improved health care for the constituents of my hon. and learned Friend and his colleagues from Leicestershire.

Leicester royal infirmary is one of the oldest hospitals outside London, although the buildings that we are talking about do not necessarily date from 1771. The original cost of the hospital was £2,762, which shows what happens when we have inflation.

I take the point that my hon. and learned Friend made about wards. Five medical wards are under criticism and it has been recognised that they are unsatisfactory. Dr. Ian Pye, the chairman of the physicians group, called them old-fashioned, but the *Leicester Mercury*, in its edition of 20 February 1987, said:

> "Despite their problems, the wards continue efficiently, with patients being treated and discharged at a higher rate than at comparable hospitals."

There is no question of the wards being dangerous, but they are open and crowded wards that Miss Nightingale would have recognised. However, three of those wards have been upgraded and £100,000 is to be spent on the other two. That activity is quite separate from the rebuilding that has been described. The DHA has decided not to spend further money upgrading the wards as they will be completely replaced in phase 4 of the overall development programme for Leicester royal infirmary.

The *Leicester Mercury* called the new development an antidote, which was uncharacteristically ungenerous of it. An antidote it will not be, but a full replacement it will.

Phase 4 is due to start in September of this year, will be completed in 1990 and will be open to the first patients almost exactly four years from now in the spring of 1991. It takes some time to ensure that everything is working. I hope that they do not practise on patients. It will cost £18 million altogether.

My hon. and learned Friend has complained about the state of some of the wards, even after some money has been spent on them. One must ask whether it makes sense to spend even more—I understand that £300,000 would be required for two wards — when they will be completely replaced shortly. The decision whether to upgrade or wait until the new facilities are ready must be a matter for the district health authority. While I recognise the force of my hon. and learned Friend's feelings, I would take issue with him when he says that the increase in demand on the LRI will mean that these wards will still be needed. Surely that is both an increase in service that would need to be argued for, and indeed which might well perpetuate the use of facilities that have now been roundly condemned.

There are other developments under way. The bone marrow transplant unit has been brought into operation at the hospital, which will mean that up to 20 people a year will not have to travel to other centres. New monitoring equipment will be bought for intensive therapy, coronary care and theatres at the infirmary. Funding will be made available for extra nurses for cancer patients. There will be £226,000 spent on the purchase of new or replacement medical equipment in response to concern which has been expressed elsewhere about equipment, and £94,000 additional revenue will be made available for improving services for drug misusers, on top of about £360,000 that has been allocated under the drugs central funding initiative for a three-year period.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my hon. Friend consider visiting Leicester to see the Leicester royal infirmary, the wards and the bone marrow unit? The unit is in receipt of funds, but those responsible for it are keen to obtain additional moneys. There was £190,000 for the first year, and it is unfortunate that not enough space is available.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the unit was allocated an extra £115,000 for a full year, and extra services start half way through the year. There will be about £55,000 this year, and so on.

As for the invitation to visit, I should like to emphasise the Health Service for the future, that we are building. I would prefer to go when the first sods are cut, then when the first foundations are laid for phase 4 or I may have the opportunity to see phases 1, 2 and 3 of the existing development.

We want to build a Health Service for the future. We are concerned to build a service for our children and our grandchildren, and I am certain that that will happen as a result of what is being proposed. The day will come when the old wards will be phased out. That day will not be long coming, and I am sure that it cannot come quickly enough——

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): May I place on record the fact that Leicestershire Members are grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health for attending the debate?

Mrs. Currie: It is entirely right and proper that we should be here. We have both visited Leicester recently and been enormously impressed by the efforts made by the consituents of all my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Leicestershire to ensure that the Health Service in Leicester uses the money with which it is well supplied in the interests of all concerned.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 26 March 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 2 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

1. **Mr. Key** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

13. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

16. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): Bank base rates are now 10 per cent. and a 1 per cent. reduction in most mortgage rates has been announced.

Mr. Key: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his Budget and on the consequences of it. As each percentage point change in interest rates represents about £80 million to the British agriculture industry, does my right hon. Friend accept that farmers and other small business men would welcome the further fall in interest rates that would be likely to flow from membership of the European monetary system?

Mr. Lawson: I note my hon. Friend's support for British entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS. I am sure that farmers and small business men will widely welcome the fall in interest rates that has taken place, as home owners will welcome the fall in mortgage rate announced from 1 May. I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is not here to learn the good news. He has certainly not apologised or informed me that he will be back late from one of his well-known lunches.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Budget was especially welcome because a large reduction in borrowing led to lower interest rates and lower mortgage rates? Is he aware that the average family with a mortgage will be £5 per week better off, in stark contrast with Opposition policy, which would penalise that family through higher taxes and higher mortgage rates?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. A contributory factor which has enabled interest rates to come down has been that we have managed to bring the public sector borrowing rate down to 1 per cent. of GDP, a figure reached only twice previously since 1950. Another major influence has been the enormous increase in world confidence in the British economy. As soon as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook forecasts a crisis, the markets know that everything will come right.

Mr. Stevens: Is my right hon. Friend aware of how well his Budget has been received in the City, where there is still confidence and considered optimism even a week later? Does he agree that the fall in interest rates before and after the Budget are the consequence of the prudent measures that he has taken in reducing Government borrowing to 1 per cent. of GDP?

Mr. Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the Budget, which has been well received not just in the City, but throughout the country. I noticed that the MORI poll in *The Sunday Times* gave it the most favourable rating of any Budget since 1979. Even more important, as a result of the successive Budgets that I and my predecessors have introduced since 1979 the British economy is more sound than it has been at any time since the war.

Mr. Skinner: Why has the cut in interest rates taken so long? Is the Chancellor aware that it will not be lost on the British people that he and his predecessors have presided over double figure interest rates for the entire seven-and-a-half-year period? That has not been true of any other Government since the second world war. Is the Chancellor aware that the British people also recall that when the Government managed to bring interest rates down temporarily in 1983 they put them up again as soon as the election was over?

Mr. Lawson: Interest rates today are lower than they were when we took over from the Labour Government in 1979. However, if by any mischance Labour were returned to office, interest rates and inflation would go sky-high again.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is considered, not only by those on the Government Benches, but by many other informed people, that his Budget is the best since 1979? Does he also accept that many of us think that his important action was to help interest rates to come down and that the Bank of England should follow his excellent lead, particularly bearing in mind today's trade figures?

Mr. Lawson: For as long as I have known him, my hon. Friend has consistently stressed the importance of interest rates. I am glad that he now welcomes the fact that they have come down a bit. He is also right to point to today's excellent current account of the balance of payments figures, which shows a surplus so far this year of £4billion.

Mr. Gould: As the explosion in private sector borrowing, which is now running at more than 10 per cent. of GDP, was identified in the Chancellor's Red Book as the major upward pressure on interest rates, why is the Chancellor doing nothing to restrain that, and succumbing instead to his obsession with the public sector borrowing requirement? Is that not another example of political prejudice overriding the needs of the economy?

Mr. Lawson: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is entirely mistaken. The chart in the Red Book shows that, while public sector borrowing has declined as a proportion of GDP, private sector borrowing has indeed increased. The totality of borrowing has, however, declined slightly. The big increase in private sector borrowing is a result of the tremendous increase in people buying their own homes on mortgage. We all know that Labour Members are opposed to home ownership, as that last intervention showed.

Glasshouses (Expenditure)

2. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the revenue in a full year of treating expenditure on glasshouses as plant and machinery rather than agricultural buildings.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I regret that a precise figure is not available, but the cost is likely to be small.

Mr. Townend: I accept that it is reasonable to write off normal agricultural buildings over 25 years, but does my right hon. Friend accept that to remain competitive with overseas growers—especially the Dutch—British growers must replace their glasshouses every seven to 10 years? As so much of the cost of a modern glasshouse could be decribed as plant and machinery, will my right hon. Friend consider changing the tax rules so that glasshouses can be dealt with as plant and machinery?

Mr. Lamont: Equipment within glasshouses can qualify for the 25 per cent. allowance. Moreover, because of the balancing adjustment system introduced in 1986, if the building itself is demolished or disposed of, the rest of the value that has not been written off can be written off. My hon. Friend made a comparison with Holland. The rate of tax for small companies here is 27 per cent., compared with 42 per cent. in that country. I am not convinced that all the advantages are against the British producers.

Value Added Tax

3. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received about Her Majesty's Customs and Excise consultation paper "Value Added Tax: Small Business Review".

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): The consultation paper on VAT was widely welcomed. My right hon. Friend announced in his Budget statement that most of the proposals would be implemented, including cash accounting, with the turnover limit raised from £100,000 to £250,000.

Mr. Spencer: Is my hon. Friend aware of the delight in the small business community at the changes in accounting which the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced in the Budget and which will improve the tax position of about half of all registered traders? Does he agree that this will lead to the further promotion of more small businesses and more jobs in this vital sector?

Mr. Stewart: I agree that this is a most important measure for small businesses. As my hon. and learned Friend rightly said, the £250,000 threshold for cash accounting covers about 840,000 traders—more than half of all traders who are registered for VAT. It was interesting to note that when the Budget resolutions were voted upon, on a Liberal and SDP initiative, the Opposition parties voted against the very resolution which enables cash accounting to be introduced.

Mr. Grylls: Does my hon. Friend accept that the prompt action on the Customs and Excise review has been well received by all those who want to encourage small firms and the self-employed? Does he also accept that the change to a cash accounting basis will give a welcome boost to cash flows, which in the past have often caused great problems to such firms? Will my hon. Friend address himself to another aspect—raising the VAT threshold for smaller firms from £21,000 to £50,000? Will he continue working to get European agreement on that, because that would also be a great help?

Mr. Stewart: I note what my hon. Friend says about the threshold for registration. As he will know, we have raised that in the Budget in accordance with inflation. There is a proposal in the European Community for 35,000 ecu, which is the equivalent of £26,000. In addition, the cash flow for small companies will be benefited not only by the measures that my right hon. Friend has announced in respect of VAT, but by the 27 per cent. corporation tax for small companies. That will be helpful to their investment.

Mr. Eastham: When can we hope for VAT to return to the 8 per cent. that it was under Labour?

Mr. Stewart: The Labour Government also had a 12½ per cent. rate for VAT. I should have thought that the fact that the Labour party is complaining about excessive consumer expenditure is hardly an argument for reducing the VAT rate.

Living Standards

4. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the rise in living standards of *(a)* a married man on average earnings and *(b)* pensioners since 1979.

15. **Mr. Forth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has on the change in living standards of a married man on average earnings and of pensioners since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The real take-home pay of a married man on average earnings will have risen by 2·2 per cent. a year between 1978-79 and 1987-88. The latest available information is that the average net income of pensioners rose by 2·7 per cent. a year in real terms between 1979 and 1985. The Budget will help to maintain that improvement.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that it is good news that under this Government pensioners' incomes have risen at an even faster rate than those of the working population? Will he

contrast that with what happened during the Liberal-Labour hung Parliament of the old days, when pensioners' living standards and incomes were destroyed by hyper inflation?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right. Pensioners' incomes under the Labour Government grew by 0·6 per cent. per annum. That is a sorry contrast with what has happened under this Government. I am sure that pensioners will welcome the reduction in basic rate, which will be worth £1·85 to the average pensioner couple. In addition, 2·8 million pensioners over the age of 65 will have the benefit of tax cuts in the Budget. I am sure that they will also welcome the increase in the age allowance which will bring it to its highest ever level in real terms.

Mr. Forth: Is my hon. Friend aware that the average married pensioner now has a weekly income of more than twice the value of the state pension? Is he worried that that message has not come across as widely as it should have done? Does he agree that if any additional benefits are to be given they should be concentrated on those who are most in need?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. Some 51 per cent. of pensioners have an occupational pension and 71 per cent. have some investment income, which is why the taxation policies and the policies that would encourage a rise in the rate of inflation — the policies espoused by the Opposition — would be damaging to the interests of pensioners.

Mr. Hardy: Before the Minister and his hon. Friends boast about these rather niggardly improvements in the pension arrangements, may I ask whether he accepts that Britain's pensioners are far worse off and receive much lower pensions than pensioners in all the other EEC states?

Mr. Lamont: I do not accept that. As has been pointed out in the House before, the proportion of gross national product that is spent on pensions in Britain compares well with most countries in the EEC. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) about the income of pensioners coming from several different sources — increasingly from occupational pensions and the state pension — representing 40 per cent. of the average pension income is an important fact that the Opposition still have to take on board.

Mr. Lawrence: Given that such a high proportion of pensioners now have an increase in income which is liable to tax, is not the introduction in the Budget of an increased age allowance for the over-80s a particularly welcome measure?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. and learned Friend is right. Pensioners have also benefited from the considerable increases in the basic thresholds, which have taken more and more people out of tax. That has benefited a lot of pensioners as well.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister proud of the fact that those on the highest incomes in the country have had the highest increase in wealth and income in the last eight years, while the poorest, whom he failed to mention — pensioners and the unemployed — have enjoyed a tiny increase in income? Will he also confirm that the overall burden of family taxation is up significantly on the levels of 1979?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman says that the poorest — the pensioners and the unemployed — have enjoyed a tiny inrease in living standards. As I have already demonstrated, living standards are considerably in excess of those that they enjoyed under the Labour Government. What has happened to people on higher incomes is irrelevant to that point. What matters is the absolute increase in the living standards of the pensioners and the poor, and they have been much better under this Government than under the Labour Government.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must not have private conversations. It is difficult to hear at this end of the Chamber.

Budget

5. **Mr. Cash** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Budget.

6. **Mr. Adley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about his Budget; and if he will make a statement.

8. **Mr. Soames** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about his Budget statement.

17. **Mr. Allan Stewart** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Budget.

Mr. Lawson: The proposals in my Budget have been widely welcomed.

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend note the accurate headline in *The Economist* of 21 March, which simply said: "Luck had nothing to do with it."? Does my right hon. Friend recall that when the Labour party was in power the only time that it cut taxation was when the IMF demanded it? Furthermore, does he recall that the alliance would impose penal taxation for increased pay, which would take away people's negotiating rights to wages and salaries, including those of the teachers?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend makes a number of good points. As to luck, I would not wish to quarrel with the verdict of *The Economist* on this occasion.

It is perfectly true that of the three or four parties which are chiefly represented in the House, one party, on this side of the House, is in favour of bringing taxes down and is doing so, and the three parties on the other side of the House are in favour of putting taxes up.

Mr. Adley: Recalling the budgets of former Socialist Chancellors, such as the absent right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead, (Mr. Jenkins) and the absent right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), is not a measure of the Government's success that their Budgets were approached with trepidation, fear of higher taxation and cuts in public expenditure, while the Budget of my right hon. Friend has been welcomed and centres on the debate on the distribution of increased national wealth?

Having said that, is my right hon. Friend not being unfair to the Opposition parties? Is it not dreadful to give them so little to criticise that they have to threaten to increase taxation at the same time as unemployment is falling and the initials "IMF" have gone out of general circulation in the language of the country? Does my right hon. Friend think that he is being fair to the Opposition parties?

Mr. Lawson: I always do my best to be fair, as my hon. Friend knows, but I am grateful to him for trying to keep

me up to the mark in that respect. It is perfectly true that one of the problems that I had in advance of the Budget was that expectations of a good Budget ran so high that there was a great danger of disappointing people. There were never such expectations when Labour Chancellors were in office.

It is also perfectly true that the only short breathing space of sound finance in which the Labour Government ever indulged was when they were under the iron heel of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Soames: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the warm welcome that his Budget has received, in particular from small business men? Does he agree that small business men are an important force in job creation? Does he also agree that if the Government are really serious about curing unemployment, everything possible should be done to secure the future of small businesses?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. Indeed, that has been the Government's consistent policy. The net growth in the formation of new businesses, even after deducting those which have shut down, has been running at about 500 a week, which is far more than in any previous post-war period. That is a very hopeful note for the future. That is one reason why not only have the number of people in work risen by about 1 million since the general election, but unemployment is now falling and has fallen for the past seven months and will continue to fall.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the decision of the Labour, Liberal and Social Democratic parties to vote against tax cuts is likely to prove as popular as the similar stand by American presidential candidate Walter Mondale, who subsequently just carried only one state.

Mr. Lawson: If the Opposition parties choose to wear the mantle of Mondale, that is their business. Far more important than the Opposition parties is what is happening to British business and industry. We saw only this week the most optimistic survey from the CBI on manufacturing industry since the figures were first collected in the latest form.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: The Chancellor of the Exchequer seems to be going round the country telling all the people of his economic success. If he is so successful, why has he done nothing about retirement pensions, and why has he done nothing about family poverty by increasing child benefit? Why have we between 3 million and 4 million unemployed, and why is there a division between north and south? What sort of success is that?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is slightly mistaken. It is not me who goes round the country speaking of the economic success; it is the country that is telling me of the economic success. The CBI report on Monday or Tuesday of this week is merely the latest manifestation of that.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about the division between north and south. I was particularly interested in an important speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on the economy in the north-east earlier this week, when he pointed out how many new businesses have now been set up in the north-east. He quoted from the *Northern Echo*, which recently published a survey entitled, "North on way back."

The Government have played fair with the pensioners, which the Labour party never did when it was in office. The answers of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to questions earlier today have supplied chapter and verse.

Mr. Alton: Does the Chancellor really believe that spending a third of public expenditure this year—over £40 billion—on social security, in many cases to keep people out of work, is a sensible way to invest public expenditure? Would it not be better, for very little more money, to create more opportunities for work and to put into work some of the 40 per cent. who have been in the dole queue for over a year who are now long-term unemployed? Does he not recognise that public opinion is in favour of spending more money to create jobs for the unemployed, of doing something about the less prosperous parts of the country and for those on fixed incomes, and not giving the resources away in tax cuts?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman has asked a bizarre question and is suggesting that all the money spent on social security is paid to keep people out of work. The vast majority is going on pensioners. I have just been asked about that. There is a need for public expenditure in particular areas. In the autumn statement for 1987-88 I announced an increase in public expenditure on the priority areas of £4¾ billion. On top of that I announced in the Budget a reduction in taxation of over £2½ billion and a reduction in public sector borrowing requirement, above what was set out in the medium term financial strategy, of £3 billion. I believe that even the hon. Gentleman should applaud that balance.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: What response has the Chancellor had to the Budget proposals from our nurses? As the right hon. Gentleman is claiming such a success for the policies of the past seven years, will he give an assurance that the Government will accept, without qualification and in full, the recommendations of the pay review body on nurses' pay when it reports to the Government in the next week or so?

Mr. Lawson: I am not quite sure what that has to do with the question, but that matter will be addressed in due course. In any event, it has not come before the Cabinet yet. As for the question of nurses and the Budget, if the hon. Gentleman wants a link, nurses will benefit considerably from the reduction of 2p in the basic rate of income tax.

Mrs. Roe: Has my right hon. Friend received any representations since the announcement that the Government will not proceed immediately with the Green Paper proposals on the reform of personal taxation? Does my right hon. Friend accept that one of the main reasons for the low level of response is that the main beneficiaries of transferable allowances are married women and they do not have a pressure group to represent them?

Mr. Lawson: I believe that my hon. Friend makes a valid point. It has always been difficult with such consultation exercises introduced by Green Papers, because one gets responses from various pressure groups and lobbies, but remarkably few from the public. However, very often it is the opinion of the public that is of great importance in such matters, rather than the views of particular interest groups. I have noted what my hon. Friend said.

Mr. Hattersley: If the post-Budget prospects for employment are as good as the Chancellor makes out, why did the Government write to the EEC to say that, on present strategies, there will be no serious inroads into the level of unemployment in Great Britain?

Mr. Lawson: The Government have done no such thing.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Manufacturing Industry

7. **Mr. Straw** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on manufacturing industry.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): Manufacturing industry will continue to benefit from the Government's policies, which have seen inflation fall to levels not experienced in this country for almost two decades and created a stable and encouraging environment in which businesses can plan and invest. The Budget continues them and we expect manufacturing output to increase by a further 4 per cent. this coming year.

Mr. Straw: Does the Chief Secretary share the widespread concern, felt on both sides of the House, about the effect of trade barriers in Japan that are operating with great discrimination against British manufacturing industry and to which there has been no reference whatsoever in the Budget debates? If the right hon. Gentleman shares our concern, can he say what action the Government intend to take to deal with Japan, other than bleating about unanswered letters?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I share that concern. Yesterday my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade made clear what action the Government were taking.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the one thing that manufacturing needs is certainty? The Budget has given the certainty of low inflation, and therefore businesses can plan ahead without devastating effects on their cash flow. Therefore, their plans have the chance of coming to fruition.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is not only the Budget, but the certainty and stability of the economic policies of the past seven years that have produced results. Since the last election manufacturing industry output has gone up by 10 per cent., productivity by nearly 16 per cent., export volume by nearly 30 per cent., investment by 21 per cent., and profitability in manufacturing industry is the highest since 1973. I believe that the continuation of those policies is best for industry and, indeed, industry has recognised that.

Mr. Millan: Will the Chief Secretary elaborate on the action which he says has been taken about Japan? Those of us who listened to the Minister for Trade yesterday gained the impression that nothing was happening except that letters had been written to the Prime Minister of Japan to which he had not even bothered to reply.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government will continue to pursue the issue that was dealt with in the letters. The Government continue to take action on the problem, within the EEC and in other ways.

Mr. Nicholls: Has my right hon. Friend received any representations from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)? If so, have the representations shed any light on the fact that the hon. Gentleman is now apparently against tax cuts, whereas in 1983, in a Fabian tract or pamphlet, he was calling for a Labour Government to implement such cuts so that

"we can buy our way back into full employment?"

Mr. MacGregor: I have received no representations from the hon. Gentleman apart from his contribution to the Budget debate, to which I listened. It is clear that the policies that he is putting forward to the country include higher interest rates, higher taxation and higher inflation that are the reverse of what manufacturing industry now requires.

Mr. Blair: Is the Minister aware that the problem of Japanese trade is not entirely new, and that in November 1986 the Prime Minister was saying that what happened in Japan should happen in Britain and vice versa, and that competition was a two-way street? When the Prime Minister of Japan does not even reply to the right hon. Lady's letters, what action will the right hon. Gentleman take to translate the Government's rhetoric into reality?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman cares to put the question about my right hon. Friend's letters to my right hon. Friend he will get a clear answer.

Budget Proposals

12. **Dr. Bray** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on the balance of payments.

14. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessement he has made of the implications for the balance of trade for 1987-88 of his Budget proposals.

Mr. MacGregor: The current account may show a modest deficit this year as the full effects of last year's exchange rate adjustment take time to work through. But export volumes are already growing strongly and in the three months to February, excluding oil and erratics, they were 11 per cent. higher than a year earlier.

Dr. Bray: The Chief Secretary will be aware that the £2 billion forecast deterioration in the balance of trade is vulnerable to further movements in the exchange rate. Is the assumption that the exchange rate will remain broadly at its present level an adequate assurance to industry, which has to make plans for the future? What will the Chancellor of the Exchequer do if the exchange rate deviates?

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made it clear that he believes that the current exchange rate is broadly satisfactory. Obviously he will bear the matter in mind as the year progresses. I am sure the hon. Gentleman has observed that we have had extremely good trade it figures for February, which have just been announced. I am sure he will be pleased that the manufacturing trade deficit is down by nearly £800 million in the three months to February compared with the previous three months.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister saying that the forecast deficit in manufactured goods of £8 billion will be less in the event of the figure that we have been given? In any event, is he happy about the size that it will be? He seems to be unduly complacent today.

Mr. MacGregor: It is too early to say what the position will be for the remainder of the year, and I would not wish to change the forecast now. I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree that there has been a good start to the year. He will know that since 1981 the United Kingdom's volume share of developed country's exports of manufactured goods has held steady after decades of decline. The past three months figures are extremely encouraging.

Mr. Forman: The question refers to the balance of payments. Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the positive factors of our balance of payments, as a consequence of the Government's policies, is that it has been possible to secure considerable earnings from overseas assets? Is it not likely that this will continue as North sea oil declines?

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There has been a large increase in overseas assets and we expect about £110 billion at the end of 1986. These assets have grown up very much over the past seven years, and, as my hon. Friend has said, they make a major contribution to our overseas earnings, and a permanent one. The current figure is about £4 billion.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that criticism of the prospects for our balance of payments comes from a rather extraordinary quarter — from parties whose policies are likely to increase substantially any deficit that will occur?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree. I shall pick up one example from the many that I could choose. It is a near certainty that the Opposition's policies would greatly increase inflation. That would most seriously and adversely affect Britain's competitiveness, and, therefore, have a serious impact on the trade figures.

Dr. McDonald: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree with the annual EC economic report, which the Government have accepted, which states that the modest recovery in investment in manufacturing is insufficient to reverse the continuing decline in manufacturing jobs and the fact that we always have more manufactured imports than exports?

Mr. MacGregor: I wish to make it quite clear that the report to which the hon. Lady refers is the Commission's report.

I am sure that she will be as pleased as anyone to recognise that manufacturing investment is expected to rise this year and that we have an exremely good CBI March survey on that score. Manufacturing investment has been well up since 1983, and we want that to continue.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one way in which British exports and manufacturing industry could be helped would be immediately to enter the European monetary system exchange rate mechanism? That would help by stimulating lower interest rates and bringing the continuity to the exchange rate that is so badly lacking, as is demonstrated by the present fluctuations.

Mr. MacGregor: The prudence shown in the Budget is clearly helping with lower interest rates. There are many other aspects of the Budget, including reductions in basic rate tax, which will help by putting downward pressure on wage increases, which will help industry's competitiveness and costs as well. Those measures are the best way in which to help manufacturing industry.

As regards the European monetary system, I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has often said in the House.

Gross Domestic Product

18. **Mr. Watts** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has about growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom compared with the rest of the European Economic Community during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Mr. Lawson: During the 1960s, and again during the 1970s, the United Kingdom rate of economic growth was the slowest of all the major EEC economies. During the 1980s we have had the fastest rate of economic growth of all the major EEC economies.

Mr. Watts: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as far as growth and productivity in manufacturing industry are concerned, Britain's performance in the 1980s has outstripped even that of Japan? Does that, perhaps, account for the reluctance of the Japanese to allow British exporters access to their market on fair terms?

Mr. Lawson: On the first point, it is true that during the 1980s as a whole our manufacturing productivity has grown fastest of all the G7 countries — the major industrialised countries that go to the annual economic summit. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, our rate of growth of manufacturing productivity was the lowest.

As for the most recent Japanese conduct in particular, we have yet to get a final decision, but the apparent shutting out of Cable and Wireless from an important contract in Japan is unacceptable.

Mr. Gould: When did the 1980s begin?

Mr. Lawson: In 1980.

Consumer Spending

19. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement concerning the current level of consumer spending.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Consumers' expenditure is forecast to grow at around 4 per cent. in real terms in 1987.

Mr. Sedgemore: Bearing in mind that the increase in consumer expenditure has been boosted by an increase in the use of credit cards, what is the precise relationship between that increase and the velocity of circulation?

Mr. Stewart: That is a topic which the hon. Gentleman might raise in the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee rather than at Question Time.

Mr. Latham: As Opposition Members are always grumbling, and as many of us are concerned about unemployment, why on earth are they concerned about consumer spending, which reduces unemployment?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but it is only one of many contradictions in the Opposition's approach to economic policy at present.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

20. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the public sector borrowing requirement for 1986-87.

Mr. Lawson: My latest estimate for the public sector borrowing requirement in 1986-87 is £4·1 billion, which is around 1 per cent. of gross domestic product. This represents the lowest that the PSBR has been as a percentage of GDP for 17 years.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a very remarkable achievement to have cut the borrowing requirement to this extent in a year in which there have also been substantial cuts in taxation, and, in the autumn statement, a very substantial increase in public spending? Is this not just the kind of triple crown which, unfortunately, has eluded the English rugby team this year?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right, and, of course, this is the result of sound policies consistently pursued over a number of years, which have strengthened the economy to the point where this is possible. That, indeed, is what would be jeopardised were there to be any change, by any mischance, in the policies that have been pursued.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March 1987.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a state banquet given by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Fallon: Is my right hon. Friend aware that when she goes to Moscow next week and raises human rights issues, with all-party support in this House, Britain's case will not have been helped by the extraordinary article in the Soviet press attacking Britian's record on human rights written by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)? Would it not help if those remarks were immediately disowned by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I agree that it would, but if the right hon. Gentleman, who has used so extensively the liberties of this country over many years, finds that he can no longer tolerate them, I should be delighted to ask Mr. Gorbachev, on his behalf, for a resident's permit in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Hattersley: When did the Prme Minister first become aware of the Health Education Council's report —*[Interruption.]*—"The Health Divide: Inequalities in Health in the 1980s", which the chairman of that council attempted to suppress on Tuesday?

The Prime Minister: I first became aware of it when I read the newspapers this morning. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the report has not yet been endorsed by the chairman of the Health Education Council or by its members. The Government have not attempted in any way to prevent publication. The chairman of the council has emphasised that at no time did Ministers intervene.

Mr. Hattersley: I should have realised that the Prime Minister would be more interested in the political machinations than in the content of the report. Let me ask her about that. How does she justify the fact that, during her eight years in office, health inequalities have so increased and the health of the lower paid and unemployed has so deteriorated that the life expectancy of these people has been reduced?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated to the right hon. Gentleman that at no time did Ministers intervene to prevent the publication of that report. I do not know whether he has read it in full. I have not read it in full, but in view of what is in the newspapers this morning I had a quick look at it. Overall, health in the United Kingdom has improved steadily. Life expectancy continues to rise, infant mortality has fallen by one third since 1979, and the study found that every country experiences to a greater or lesser extent differences in health between regional, occupational and income groups.

Mr. Hattersley: I am not suggesting that Ministers wrote or even read the report. I am suggesting that they are responsible for the circumstances that the report reveals. Does the right hon. Lady understand that that report proves conclusively that there is a lower life expectation for men and women in the lower income groups than there was eight years ago, and that is the result of their deteriorating health prospects? In the light of that report, how can the right hon. Lady justify a system that does not concentrate resources on pensioners, on child benefit and on reducing unemployment? In the light of that report, how does the right hon. Lady justify a policy which, over eight years, has cut taxes by £50 a day for the best paid and will not provide £5 a week for the pensioners?

The Prime Minister: The Government have vastly increased support for the National Health Service—the right hon. Gentleman chooses to ignore this—from £7½ billion in the year when I went into No. 10 Downing street to £20 billion next year. Moreover, this Government have attempted to deal with regional health problems by a policy which was started by the last Government—the policy of re-allocation of National Health Service resources to those areas in greatest need. We London Members have occasion to learn that what we have given up has benefited the other regions.

Mr. Onslow: Has my right hon. Friend seen the renewed reports that the Japanese Government intend to squeeze Cable and Wireless out of its planned investment in the Japanese telecommunications industry? What do the Government intend to do about that deplorable situation?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, I wrote to Mr. Nakasone, the Prime Minister of Japan, on 4 March to express our interest in the Cable and Wireless bid. I have not yet had a reply—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those hon. Members who were in the House yesterday will know that this is a matter of grave concern.

The Prime Minister: We see this as a test case of how open the Japanese market really is. I remind the House that we shall shortly have more powers. When, for example, the powers under the Financial Services Act 1986 and the Banking Bill become available, we shall be able to take action in cases where other countries do not offer the same full access to financial services as we do.

Dr. Owen: Will the right hon. Lady, on her visit to Moscow, on which we wish her well, raise three questions?

First, on the comprehensive test ban treaty, in which we are a direct participant in the negotiations, will she explore the possibility of an interim agreement for a reduced number of tests at a much lower threshold? Secondly, on the 1977 treaty on the prevention of accidental use of nuclear weapons, will she build on article 4 and improve the direct communications between Downing street and Moscow? Thirdly, will the right hon. Lady raise with the Soviet Union the serious problems of the danger to shipping in the Straits of Hormuz, on which there should be united action and on which Soviet assistance in saying that the Iranian threat to shipping will be reduced internationally would be very helpful?

The Prime Minister: On the first matter, I have already made clear our view that there should be a step-by-step approach. I do not think that there is anything further to report. With regard to the 1977 treaty, it is possible that my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary will deal with that matter with the Soviet Foreign Minister. On shipping, we are already very active in the Security Council of the United Nations. There must be no question ever of closing that sea highway to international shipping. We are already very much concerned to see what we can do. As for the other matters, I think that the right hon. Gentleman realises that there are even more important matters to raise in Moscow than those to which he has referred.

Mr. Warren: I wish my right hon. Friend well on her visit to the Soviet Union. If she raises the issue of human rights with Mr. Gorbachev, she will undoubtedly be told that that is an internal matter for the Soviet Union. Will the Prime Minister then make it clear to Mr. Gorbachev that to us in the West matters of human rights are the foundations of democracy, and that if he wants to deal with us he must understand that once and for all?

The Prime Minister: Yes. We will raise matters of human rights. I have had a tremendous number of names and personal cases submitted to me, but it is not only an internal matter. Ever since the Helsinki accords were signed we have had standing to inquire into these matters. If we are to get the reductions in nuclear weapons and other weapons that we seek and would wish to have, we will be able to have full confidence and trust in the Soviet Union only if we feel that she treats her people more like we treat ours than is the case now.

Q2. **Mr. Park** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Park: Was the Prime Minister consulted before Austin Rover was instructed to hand over confidential information to Ford during the abortive merger last year, or did the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) feel confident that he already knew the Prime Minister's attitude to this act of industrial sabotage?

The Prime Minister: I believe that matters were handed over between the two companies on a reciprocal basis.

Burnham Grammar School

Q3. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Burnham grammar school.

The Prime Minister. I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Burnham grammar school is a school of proven worth and excellence, which is widely supported by the local community and industry? Does she agree that the fact that there are only 150 grammar schools remaining in the country is a matter for considerable regret? Will she, therefore, ask the Secretary of State to think long and hard before approving any further closures?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that grammar schools have served our country very well. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have great cause to be very grateful for the education that grammar schools have provided. For many of us they have provided the ladder from the bottom to the top. I will pass on my hon. Friend's views to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education, but I understand that my right hon. Friend will not approve the closure of a school of quality unless he is satisfied that it is unlikely to be able to sustain that quality or that the alternative is likely to be better.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: Will you be telling Mr. Gorvachev that you are totally wedded to cruise and Trident missiles——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Prime Minister be telling Mr. Gorbachev that she regards cruise and Trident missiles as inevitable in this country and that she wants to see Britain as a permanent nuclear weapons state? Will not her commitments on this issue hinder the disarmament process? What will be broken—her commitments or the disarmament process?

The Prime Minister: I will be making it perfectly clear that the nuclear deterrent has deterred not only conventional war but nuclear war. I think it vital that this country retains its independent nuclear deterrent, which is but a very small percentage of the enormous number of intercontinental ballistic missiles that the Soviet Union possesses.

Mr. Lawler: When my right hon. Friend meets Mr. Gorbachev, will she express her utter condemnation of the bombing raids launched from Afghanistan on Pakistan territory this week, which resulted in the death of many innocent civilians, including Afghan refugees? Will she urge him to use his influence to bring a halt to these murderous missions?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course the subject of Afghanistan must be raised. Afghanistan is an occupied country, and the only satisfactory conclusion is for the Soviets fully to withdraw their occupying forces and leave Afghanistan to determine her own future and to choose her own Government. The matter will be raised with the Secretary General.

Q5. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday, 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Prime Minister reconsider the announcement on Monday that "Lord UB 40" intends to introduce economic conscription on to YTS? Will she also accept the answer given to me on the same day by her Employment Minister, which shows that allowances on YTS have been cut by £18·50 compared with the rise of average earnings over the last nine years? Will she finally recognise that today's lunchtime demonstration of hundreds of London school students will spread like wildfire over the next 10 days unless these proposals for conscription are dropped?

The Prime Minister: No. We have successfully met our guarantee each year of a place on YTS for all 16-year-olds, and we have extended the guarantee this year to 17-year-olds. We believe that there is no need for anyone under 18 to be unemployed, because everyone has the choice of a place at school, college or on YTS, or a job. I would have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would also recognise that YTS gives an excellent training for young people who would not otherwise have it and will help them to get jobs. I hope that he will welcome that.

Q6. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to study the international employment figures, which show a general and continuing decline in traditional manufacturing jobs, balanced by increases in other sectors? Does she agree that the constant denigration of service jobs by Opposition Members is resented by the millions of employees in distribution and transport, communications, health and research, who make a vital contribution to the national economy and whose numbers have gone up by well over 1 million since my right hon. Friend took office in 1979?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that international figures show that a smaller proportion of working people are employed in manufacturing industry, which, nevertheless, is producing far more in output because of advances in technology. That is a characteristic of all Western industrialised countries. A further characteristic, as my hon. Friend says, is that an increasing number of people are employed in services, which also make a tremendous contribution to our balance of payments surplus. Services are a valuable supplier of jobs in this country and others. I agree with my hon. Friend that the prospects for the future in this country are very healthy, both in manufacturing and in service jobs.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): May I ask the Patronage Secretary to state the business for next week?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Wakeham): I have been asked to reply.

The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 30 MARCH—Second Readings of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill, the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Bill *[Lords]* and the Pilotage Bill *[Lords]*.

TUESDAY 31 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the Criminal Justice Bill.

WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL—Completion of remaining stages of the Criminal Justice Bill.

THURSDAY 2 APRIL—Motions on supplementary and social security benefit orders and regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion for the Easter Adjournment.

FRIDAY 3 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 6 APRIL—Opposition Day (11th Allotted Day), subject for debate to be announced.

Motions relating to Scottish Legal Aid and Advice Regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

[Debate on Thursday 2 April:

Draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment Regulations 1987

Child Benefit (General) Amendment Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 357)

Social Security Benefit (Dependency) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 355)

Supplementary Benefit (Conditions of Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 358)

Draft Social Security (Class 1 Contributions — Contracted-out Percentages) Order 1987

Draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables) Regulations 1987

Draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables — Transitional Provisions) Regulations 1987

Draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment and Uprating Regulations 1987

Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) (Amendment) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 317)

Social Fund (Maternity and Funeral Expenses) General Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 481)

Debate on Monday 6 April:

Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 365)

Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 366)

Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 381)

Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 382)

Legal Aid (Scotland) (Children) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 384).]

Mr. Hattersley: I am grateful to the Patronage Secretary.

Can the right hon. Gentleman tell the House when the Finance Bill is likely to be published? Secondly, he will know that there are several issues that should be debated in Government time. Almost the most important among them is the report of the Health Education Council. Can such a debate be arranged at the first opportunity? Thirdly, there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who are anxious for a debate on trade with Japan. I do not think that there is any disposition in any quarter to wait for the post. May we have a debate in the immediate future? Finally, I take it for granted that the Prime Minister will make a statement on her return from Moscow. Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that absolutely?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already said that she will make a statement on her return from Moscow, probably next Thursday.

Ministers saw the Health Education Council report only this morning. They need to consider it before they decide what to do, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I shall refer to the Secretary of State the right hon. Gentleman's concern about trade with Japan. We hope that the Finance Bill will be published before Easter.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the strong feeling in the House that was referred to earlier at Prime Minister's Question Time about the stubborn refusal of the Japanese Government to allow Cable and Wireless to play a full part in the international digital communications consortium? Is he also aware of an Early-day motion that has been signed by hon. Members of all parties? Will he do his best to arrange a debate at the earliest possible opportunity so that we can discuss the matter and make it quite clear to the Japanese Government how strongly we feel about it?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are well aware of the concern in the House. I shall immediately refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to see what can be done.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Has the Patronage Secretary had a chance to study early-day motion 762, which deals with free ports in the United Kingdom?

[That this House notes the recent Report: 'The Free Solution', by Timothy F. Bayer Helm, detailing the problems facing the six United Kingdom free zones situated in: Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, Prestwick and Southampton; calls for, in particular, changes in the regulations governing value-added tax in United Kingdom free zones; urges a constructive change in Treasury attitudes to boost the free zones potential; further urges that representatives of the British free zone operators be allowed to sit on the Free Port Steering Committee; feels that the relaxation of regulations in these areas would have no significant adverse impact on Government revenues; and calls on the Government to accept its responsibility as the creator of the British free zone experiment and all that it entails.]

Has he noticed that it has enjoyed the support of all hon. Members and that many hon. Members are worried about the constraints that have been imposed on free ports? Will he give the House a chance to debate this important motion? In joining with other hon. Members who wish the Prime Minister well during her visit to Moscow, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to say whether it is customary, or indeed whether it is within his

long recollection of politics, for a general election campaign to be launched simultaneously in the Kremlin and in the oval office?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure whether the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question falls within my responsibility. I have certainly seen early-day motion 762. I realise that it refers to important matters. I cannot see a way of having an early debate on the subject. There are occasions such as during the debates on the Easter Adjournment when such important points can be raised.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend use this occasion to announce a unique innovation so that the Leader of the Opposition can make a statement on his visit to Washington?

Mr. Wakeham: It is tempting, but I do not believe that it is a practical proposition.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Will the right hon. Gentleman find time to ensure that there is a debate on Rolls-Royce, especially in view of the imminence of privatisation and the rumours that are flying around that the Rolls-Royce plant in my constituency may be used for some ridiculous purpose?

Mr. Wakeham: I realise that that is an important matter, but it is difficult to find Government time for it at the moment. I have just announced an Opposition day for Monday 6 April. The hon. Gentleman might have a word with his right hon. Friends to see what they want to debate.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Other than the passage of seven days, can my right hon. Friend say whether we have made any progress towards having a debate on the environment in the countryside, which my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has been promising for some weeks?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that that is an important matter. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House hopes that there will be a debate on agriculture and the rural economy very soon after the Easter recess.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): Will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the Government will make a statement before Easter on the recommendations of the pay review board on nurses' pay and that the Prime Minister will promptly accept such recommendations in the same way as she promptly accepted the recommendations of the Top Salaries Review Body some while ago?

Mr. Wakeham: This may be the first time that I have done this job, but I shall not accept what the hon. Gentleman has asked me to do. I will refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the patience of midlands industrialists has been sorely tried over the past 10 years or so about the imbalance of trade between ourselves and Japan? Their concern was crystallised yesterday. Representations have already been made. I urge him to allow a debate on the subject as it is extremely relevant.

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly recognise the importance of the matter, but I do not think that I can add to what I have already said.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): The Government's response to the Select Committee's report on the prison medical service was published today. It is a matter about which there is massive concern and on which the Select Committee took a wide range of worrying evidence. Can the right hon. Gentleman undertake to provide an opportunity to debate the report at the earliest opportunity in view of the massive concern about it?

Mr. Wakeham: Such reports are important. I recognise that there is concern about the matter. I shall certainly refer it to my right hon. Friend.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): My right hon. Friend will doubtless be aware of the concern about support for science, and particularly the gulf between the reality of the Government's policy, the pattern which some of us would like to emerge, and the perception of both aspects among the public, particularly the scientific community. Is he aware of our considerable anxiety about the matter and our wish to have a full-scale debate on the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that that is another very important subject. I cannot promise an early debate upon it but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's apparance at the Dispatch Box. Now may I ask him a favour? Will he have a word with the Secretary of State for Energy, who is shortly to present a new White Paper, and ask him to include in it what I am asking for in my Bill, which deals with the unfairness of compensation for repairs in mining constituencies after damage to property? If the Secretary of State for Energy were prepared to do that, I should withdraw my Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's long experience of these matters, and I shall certainly ensure that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry recognises the points that he has made.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Since it has been widely reported in the newspapers that a White Paper will be published soon on the future of higher education, does my right hon. Friend believe that he will be able to find time soon after the Easter recess for an extensive debate on this important subject, which is of great concern not only to scientists but to those in all disciplines?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that we shall have to see how we get on. First, the White Paper has to be published. Then we shall see where we go from there.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman find time next week to discuss the atrocious and unforgivable closure of the Caterpillar Tractor Company in my constituency? Bearing in mind that the situation is becoming very serious indeed, it is important to have a debate in the House, in Government time if possible.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot comment on the court's decision, or anything of that kind, but I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Will my right hon. Friend have a word with his right hon. Friend the Chief Whip before he returns to his cloistered existence and ask him to make the business during the week after Easter somewhat light?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly do that. I can answer for the Patronage Secretary and say that it is his constant concern to keep business as light as possible.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made by a Government spokesman on the bailing out of the South African banking system? Is he aware that it owes £23 billion and that British banks, such as Standard Chartered and Barclays, are heavily involved in bailing out the South African régime? In view of the furore this time last year, what steps will the Government be taking to tell these British banks not to get involved, especially as any bad debts that are incurred by British banks are set off against tax in other respects, which means that the British taxpayer is having to foot the bill for any bad debts that are incurred by the South African régime? Is it not important, therefore, for a statement to be made and to ensure that British banks are not involved?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept the premise upon which the question was asked, but I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Appreciating the national concern that if a man on a charge of murder in England had not been released on bail PC Blakelock might still be alive, will my right hon. Friend seek ways of using the Criminal Justice Bill for England, which comes before the House next Tuesday, to amend the Bail Act for England? Had the law of Scotland applied, Silcott could never have been released and PC Blakelock would still be alive.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that everybody in the House will be concerned about those events, and I shall certainly refer what my hon. and learned Friend has said to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I do not think that I can go any further than that.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Reverting to the disgraceful cancellation of the press conference by the Health Education Council, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether we are to have a full scale debate on the resourcing of the Health Service, because concern all over the country, not least in the city of Leicester, is growing over the lack of resources for hospitals, the closure of hospitals, the low level of nurses' pay, and the time that people are having to wait for essential operations if they are to live their lives without pain?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly cannot accept the premise on which the hon. and learned Gentleman put his question. I cannot add to what I have already said.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In view of the difference of opinion between the Office of Fair Trading and the Securities and Investments Board about what has become known as polarisation under the Financial Services Act 1986, can my right hon. Friend tell me whether it remains the intention of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to present before Easter the orders that we have been promised?

Mr. Wakeham: As I understand it, the Act requires the Secretary of State to consult before he lays the orders. I cannot go any further than that, other than saying that he has consulted.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Who will answer the allegations of Mr. James Miller about the activities of the security services during the course of the Ulster workers' strike in 1974? Has the right hon. Gentleman seen last week's statement by a former Prime Minister in which he said that he would co-operate with the Prime Minister in helping her to take a decision about whether there should be an inquiry, and who has also asked for a monitoring role for the security services to be set up?

Mr. Wakeham: I know one person who will not answer those allegations, and that is me. I can add nothing to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said recently in the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Is there any point in making progress next week on any Bills or any regulations following the astonishing and unprecedented decision by the Court of Appeal yesterday to disregard entirely a law passed by this Parliament on equal pay and instead to make its interpretation of a clause of the treaty of Rome in coming to a decision? Would it not be better if, instead of having such debates next week, we had a debate on the implications for the sovereignty of this House of that judgment, particularly as the judgment will destroy a lot of jobs and drive a coach and horses through established pay bargaining procedures in Britain?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the business that I announced for next week is duller than the debate that my hon. Friend has suggested, but it would be better to pursue the business that I have announced.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Is the Patronage Secretary aware that another week has gone by without the announcement on helicopter procurement and orders for Westland that was promised for the end of last year or at the very latest during the first few weeks of this year? Does he realise that that is another week for dangerous speculation about the company's future, another week in which the company cannot plan its future, and another week during which jobs have been endangered? When will this announcement be made?

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate the concern not only in the hon. Gentleman's constituency but in many other parts of the country. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wants to make an announcement as soon as possible, but it is better to get the right answer than to give a premature answer.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the reason why many Members on both sides of the House are calling for an urgent debate on trade with Japan is that we would like to express the view that Mr. Nakasone's policy on free trade is an absolute sham in the light of the Cable and Wireless experience? There seems to be one rule for exports to Japan and a completely different rule for Japan's own exports.

Mr. Wakeham: I am well aware of the strength of feeling and the reasons given by my hon. Friend. I do not think that I can add to what I have already said, except to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) has an Adjournment debate next Thursday on this subject and I am sure that the Minister replying to that debate will be as helpful as he can.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Government have today published their White Paper on legal aid and, although there is not yet a copy in the Library for hon. Members, I have managed to secure one from a journalist. Will we be given an opportunity to debate the Government's proposals on the Floor of the House, or is it the Government's intention that the debate should take place upstairs on next week's legal aid statutory instruments?

Mr. Wakeham: I have no plans to announce any debate. It is obviously a very important matter, and the first thing that we must do is consider the White Paper and then see how we may proceed from there.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): My question is not about the Royal Military School of Music or Army bands; there are other subjects. Can my right hon. Friend find time to debate the proposal by the Department of the Environment to classify bees as pests? This is a matter of concern not only to beekeepers but to lovers of honey.

Mr. Wakeham: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the successful outcome of his previous campaign. I hope that he does not have to wait so long for a successful outcome to this one. The matter is of great concern to beekeepers and I shall certainly refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman find time for the Secretary of State for Education and Science to announce that money has been found to enable the research councils to resume funding of essential new science research applications?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will find a way to publicise that, if and when it happens, but I shall certainly refer the matter to him.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will call those hon. Members who have been rising in their places. If the Government Chief Whip finds it more comfortable to remain standing, I am sure that we shall all understand.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend help the House by telling us whether in the past year or so Liberal and SDP Members have tended to vote more often with the Conservative party or with the Labour party and whether alliance Members have sometimes voted in different Lobbies from one another?

Mr. Wakeham: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for your kind suggestion, but I prefer to remain a moving target if that is all right with you.

I have enough difficulty keeping track of the voting habits of some of my hon. Friends without wasting too much time on those of the minor parties, although I follow early-day motions with some interest and am learning things that I had not realised before.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): As part of that process, I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 802:

[That this House congratulates the Leader of the Liberal Party for his honesty in saying that he is "only faintly attracted to principles without power"; notes that he is speedily providing evidence for this statement by disassociating himself from every part of the official 1986 Liberal Party publication "These are Liberal Policies" that he finds temporarily inconvenient; concludes that he is prepared to do anything and say anything that seems politically opportune and disavow it later on the ground that it is "superseded"; and has no doubt that this abandonment of principles means that he now has no chance at all of winning the power that he craves.]

and to early-day motion 812:

[That this House notes that according to the official 1986 Liberal Party publication, These Are Liberal Policies, the Liberal Party's priorities for Government include the reduction of maximum sentences and the increasing of remission of prison sentences from one third to one half; notes the strange reluctance of the Leader of the Liberal Party to mention this pledge in his recent book, The Time Has Come; and calls on him to reveal whether this is another Liberal Party policy that he has ditched in his scramble for political advantage.]

In their different ways, those motions highlight the contradictions and inconsistencies between "These are Liberal Policies" in 1986 and "The Time has Come" in 1987. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we should have a debate to try to sort out those inconsistencies and to see whether the 1986 declaration in favour of political control of police forces has been superseded by the ambiguity of the 1987 statement? Does he agree that it would save time in the long run if the debate took place now as the longer we leave it the more inconsistencies we shall have to investigate?

Mr. Wakeham: I am always suspicious of any suggestion that is supposed to save time. These are interesting matters, but I do not see any time for them next week.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Does my right hon. Friend recall that when we last voted on capital punishment, in 1983, the Conservative party was divided roughly two thirds in favour and one third against, which is not surprising as that broadly represents public opinion, but the Opposition voted almost unanimously against capital punishment? Will my right hon. Friend use his particular facilities through the usual channels to ensure that this week's vote is a free vote for the Opposition and not what is euphemistically known as a light three-line Whip?

Mr. Wakeham: These are mysteries which I do not think are best aired on the Floor of the House. It may be helpful, however, if I tell the House that if there is a debate on capital punishment — that will depend on your selection, Mr. Speaker — I believe that it should be carried out in a properly structured way. I have therefore had discussions through the usual channels and it will be the Government's intention to table a motion providing for a full day's debate on the subject on Wednesday and allowing the House to vote on the motion at a reasonable time.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend rightly has a reputation for fairness. Will he extend that fairness to the Leader of the Opposition on his return from the United States? Is he aware that *The Wall Street Journal* this week reported that the reaction to the right hon. Gentleman's previous visit was one of incredulity and derision? Will my right hon. Friend therefore allow

[Mr. Eric Forth]

adequate time for the Leader of the Opposition to explain what he believes the reaction of our friends and allies to have been to his latest visit and for us to express our views?

Mr. Wakeham: It is tempting, but I wonder whether my hon. Friend wants more or less than 20 minutes to be allowed for the Leader of the Opposition. We shall have to see about that.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I remind my right hon. Friend of early-day motion 797.

[That this House notes that during the Parliamentary Session 1985-86 Right honourable and honourable Members belonging to the Liberal and Social Democratic Parties voted as follows:

Constituency	*with Labour*	*with Government*	*Ratio*
Mossley Hill	136	23	6:1
Yeovil	94	14	7:1
Berwick upon Tweed	108	18	6:1
Gordon	102	14	7:1
Montgomery	104	18	6:1
North East Cambridgeshire	97	17	6:1
Ceredigion and Pembroke North	109	25	4:1
Bermondsey	113	14	8:1
Inverness, Nairn & Lochaber	64	15	4:1
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	135	21	6:1
Brecon and Radnor	106	23	5:1
Leeds West	117	16	7:1
Isle of Wight	74	16	5:1
Rochdale	44	2	22:1
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	104	24	4:1
Orkney and Shetland	128	28	5:1
Colne Valley	76	10	8:1
Ryedale	50	6	8:1
Woolwich	89	13	7:1
Glasgow, Hillhead	55	5	11:1
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	112	20	6:1
Caithness and Sutherland	58	7	8:1
Stockton South	91	9	10:1
Portsmouth South	105	15	7:1
Plymouth, Devonport	67	9	7:1

When my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary next summons a Conservative Member for a dressing down for missing one of the hundreds of Divisions that take place in Parliament, will he put matters into perspective by reminding himself that the hon. Member for Rochdale (Mr. Smith) has bothered to vote in only 46 Divisions in this entire Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: Perhaps I should gently remind my hon. Friend that one of the irksome aspects of being in Government is the necessity to turn up at the House and support the Government. That is something to which Conservative Members have become accustomed, and to which others, I fear, are growing unaccustomed.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Is my right hon. Friend confident that enough time has been allocated to the 130 clauses and 18 new clauses of the Criminal Justice Bill, bearing in mind that there is a new clause providing for bail not to be allowed to those accused of rape or murder, a clause to try to overturn lenient sentences and, most important, a clause on the death penalty? If, when we vote on the death penalty, the Opposition impose a three-line Whip, will my right hon. Friend publicise the fact after the vote so that it is known that Conservative Members voted with their consciences and Labour Members were whipped?

Mr. Wakeham: We shall have to see how we get on. We have allocated two days for that debate. While I appreciate that there is a good deal for us to get through, it is an important Bill, and we want to get it to the other place as soon as possible.

I appreciate my hon. Friend's interest in the matter, and I only regret that we shall hear rather fewer of his speeches in two days than we would have heard in three days.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early statement on the siege of Ealing, which is becoming more serious every day? About 40 schools are now closed, some of them until after Easter. Ealing's citizens are facing a rate increase of no less than 65 per cent. They are also obtaining no services, because of the strike inspired by the council's failure to honour a promise made to its workforce. As a result, old people in sheltered accommodation cannot get to the laundries, telephones and common rooms, and are suffering considerably. A statement on those events is urgently needed.

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate how hard my hon. Friend works for all his constituents in Ealing, to whatever party they belong. Unfortunately, I cannot promise him either a statement or a debate next week. However, he could try his luck in the Easter Adjournment debates.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion No. 690?

[That this House views with concern the proposal of the Minister of Sport to merge the function and rôle of Playboard with that of the Sports Council; and, in view of the negative responses to this proposal from many interested organisations, urges him to postpone a final decision on this matter in order to allow a full debate to take place on the alternatives.]

Although we had a three-hour debate on sport earlier this week, we are anxious to have a debate in Government time so that we can persuade the Minister with responsibility for sport — who is also responsible for children's play — that child's play has not much to do with sport, and that many hon. Members on both sides of the House consider its independence from the Sports Council very important?

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate my hon. Friend's concern. I am pleased to tell him that he has been successful in the ballot for the Adjournment, so he can initiate a debate on Monday 6 April. I shall ensure that the Minister is asked to give him the fullest possible reply.

Parliamentary Papers

3.59 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to discuss the status of documents made available to the House.

During the Budget debate, a document, entitled "Explanatory Memorandum on European Community Documents" was placed upon the Table, along with the document itself. The document itself was endorsed and specifically signed by the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry. The explanatory memorandum which accompanied it was endorsed and explicitly signed by the Minister of State, Treasury.

The main document contained the words that I quoted to the Chancellor of the Exchequer earlier today. He replied that no so such document existed — or that no such document had been endorsed by the Government.

The House is put in an intolerable position — as are you, Mr. Speaker — if documents submitted by the Government appear on the Table and then, when hon. Gentlemen quote from them, senior members of the Government deny that such documents exist. I need your ruling, Mr. Speaker, either today or at your convenience, on how hon. Members can protect themselves against denials by the Government of the existence of opinions and documents that they have endorsed and submitted through you to the House.

Mr. Speaker: It seems that the Chancellor was correct in laying the document on the Table. My recollection is that he referred to a letter, but it is not for me to become involved. The Chief Whip will have heard the remarks of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and I am sure that they will be taken up.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Government to give copies of their White Paper on legal aid to the press but not to make copies available to right hon. and hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: That problem is often raised with me, and I repeat what I always say — that if copies of Government papers are given to the press, presumably embargoed, hon. Members should be informed at the same time.

Prayers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During prayers at the beginning of each day's business the noise from outside the Chamber seems to be on the increase. Perhaps you could ask hon. Members waiting to come into the Chamber to keep the noise down because it is disturbing if one is praying.

Mr. Speaker: I have not noticed the noise, perhaps because I am at the opposite end of the Chamber. I shall ensure that the House authorities look into the problem to see what can be done about it.

Orders of the Day

Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

LIABILITY OF CARRIERS FOR PASSENGERS WITHOUT PROPER DOCUMENTS

4.2 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of any person, who after arriving in the United Kingdom and applying for asylum, is given exceptional leave to remain.'.

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 5, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of any person, who after arriving in the United Kingdom is given leave to remain.'.

No. 6, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of any person, while that person is in the United Kingdom.'.

No. 1, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of a person who arrives from a country with a military government or a country subject to reporting by the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations.'.

No. 10, in page 1, line 21, at end insert—

'(3) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of any person transported from a country which is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees.'.

No. 11, in page 1, line 21, at end insert—

'(3) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of any person subsequently granted refugee status under the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees.'.

No. 12, in page 1, line 21, at end insert—

'(3) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) where a carrier reasonably assumes that to refuse to carry would thereby place the intended passenger in danger.'.

No. 13, in page 1, line 21, at end insert—

'(3) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) in respect of any person whom a carrier could reasonably expect to be entitled to refugee status under the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees.'.

Mr. Dubs: Amendment No. 2 deals with the right of asylum and goes to the heart of the criticisms of the Bill. If the amendment were accepted, airlines and other carriers would have at least some incentive to carry to this country somebody who does not have the required documentation if the airline or other carrier has good reason to believe that that person, on arriving here and applying for asylum, would be given exceptional leave to remain.

Even if the Minister accepts the amendment, it will not turn an undesirable Bill into one which is all right. All that I seek to do is to make the Bill slightly less bad. The heart of the argument is that asylum should be possible. The amendment is one way in which the United Kingdom's obligations under the United Nations convention can be met. Failing that, I believe that we shall be in breach of the convention and therefore of our international agreements.

Without the amendment I do not understand how the majority of asylum seekers can get to this country to claim asylum. I appreciate that on Second Reading the Minister said that there was the possibility of applying for asylum from a country other than the one from which the asylum seeker originates and that, even in the country of origin, it is possible for asylum seekers to apply to enter on grounds of hardship. He said that, having obtained a visa and travelled here, the asylum seeker could apply to be considered as a refugee. The Minister said that five hardship cases had been granted visas in Sri Lanka, but the opportunities for people to come here by that means are limited. The amendment is worth considering because it will be of benefit.

The issue arose as the result of 64 Tamils arriving here some weeks ago. The Home Secretary tried to remove them immediately without giving them the chance to put their case. Investigations show that at least some of the Tamils were beaten and tortured in Sri Lanka. I have not heard a denial from the Minister, and I should be surprised if one were forthcoming. I understand that in the view of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees one or more of the Tamils would be mandatory refugees under the United Nations convention.

If the measure had been in force before the 64 Tamils arrived, not one of them would have been allowed on these shores. Therefore, not one of them would have been able to attempt to apply for political asylum. By passing the Bill we are likely to be in breach of the United Nations convention.

The Minister and other hon. Members will have seen in today's press a reference to a Ugandan citizen, who, having been refused political asylum by the Home Office and having attempted to commit suicide at Gatwick airport, hanged himself in Pentonville prison. That individual was in fear of his life in Uganda. The Minister will be more familiar with the background details than the press. It is a sad and tragic story of someone who was so convinced of the dangers if he were forced to return to his own country, so dismayed at the Home Office refusal to allow him to stay here, that he felt he had no option but to commit suicide. It is indeed a tragic case.

Amendment No. 5 differs in one respect from amendment No. 2 in that it does not address itself specifically to asylum seekers or refugees. It provides that if anyone is given leave to remain here, even if that person arrives without a visa or other documentation, that should not be a reason for fining the airline or other carrier.

I can give an example of how that could happen. From time to time children, say, from West Africa, are in the care of a grandparent. The grandparent becomes ill or dies and other relatives put the child on a plane to London without organising the necessary documentation. When that child arrives there is usually an argument and hon. Members make representations that the child be allowed to stay with its parents rather than be sent back to the country of origin to obtain the documentation and return here.

An airline might be aware of the human tragedy of such a case. If the amendment were accepted, it would be possible to argue with the airline that it would possibly, or probably, avoid a fine. Without such an amendment,

someone with a desperate, urgent or compassionate reason for coming here quickly would never get here. Perhaps in the end the documentation would be sorted out, but that could be agonising. Some cases are so exceptional that an airline, under the pressure of such an amendment, might be willing to bring such a person here.

Amendment No. 6 provides a safeguard and ensures that, while a discussion or argument is taking place between the individual or his or her representatives and the Home Office, the airline will not be fined until the matter has been resolved. Otherwise there may be a temptation for the Home Office to impose the fine quickly. The Government probably would have done that in the case of the Tamils. In the circumstances in which the Tamils arrived, the Home Office would probably have been tempted to impose a fine. In the event, it would not have been appropriate. The amendment is worth thinking about.

Amendment No. 1, in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart), is interesting and important. It is concerned with people who arrive from a country which has a military Government. Presumably it is intended to refer particularly to the most oppressive regimes, from which people may have to flee without any of the necessary documentation and who would therefore warrant being treated exceptionally. Amendments Nos. 10 to 13 relate to different ways of dealing with asylum and people who are in danger in those countries.

These amendments make valid points which, if accepted, would prevent this country being in breach of the United Nations convention. Therefore, I commend them to the Committee.

Dame Judith Hart (Clydesdale): I want to support the amendment moved by my hon. Friend and to speak to my amendment, No. 1, which is on a separate point. As far as I can see, all the amendments relate to the liability of the carrier when somebody has arrived in this country. My amendment is concerned with how people may acquire the documents specified in clause 1(1)*(a)*—a valid passport with photograph or some other such document — to satisfy the carrier that it would not be exposed to liability if it brought that person into this country.

I believe that the amendment is important. It stems from a practical experience of my own. I recognise that the Home Secretary is concerned to limit—in a way with which I do not agree—the influx of economic refugees, with whom we are familiar. The Bill is the wrong way to deal with that. However, the judgment on people, under the Bill, can be made only when they have arrived. If they are genuine refugees, in the circumstances that I have tried to encompass in my brief amendment, it is unlikely that they will have satisfactory documentation. I will explore that briefly in a moment.

I do not believe that the Home Secretary, who is attempting to deal with a problem that he has perceived, has the slightest intention of abandoning the concept of the United Kingdom as a place of refuge for genuine refugees from atrocious regimes. I do not believe that he has that in mind at all, but, given that, he must change the wording of the Bill. As drafted, the Bill takes no practical account of how to get out of a country that is doing vicious things. My amendment seeks to introduce the means whereby the Home Secretary could do that. It is fairly limited; it does not include everyone. It specifies the countries to which we would be making reference. Obviously, it will include military Governments, whether they be of the East or West. Countries which have been the subject of reports from the special rapporteurs of the Commission of Human Rights of the United Nations Economic and Social Council are Afghanistan, Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala. In addition, reports have been sponsored, which are not the subject of special rapporteurs, on South Africa and Poland. There is not an extensive number of countries.

My amendment is unsatisfactory in that by the time a country comes to the attention, through ECOSOC, of the Commission of Human Rights, which can then request a special rapporteur and a special report, one year or 18 months have already gone by, in which time dreadful things may have been happening. Even my amendment is not totally satisfactory, but it has drawn the attention of the Home Secretary to those factors.

4.15 pm

I can best explain what is in my mind as follows. The Home Secretary will know that, under his new rules on the representations of hon. Members and hon. Members with special interests, he has tended, tacitly, to let me have a special interest in refugees from Latin America and, in particular, from Chile. He has been kind to me on any specific cases that I have raised with him, even though they did not concern my constituents. The trouble is that when a refugee arrives, he or she is nobody's constituent until settled somewhere.

I shall be brief, but I should like the Home Secretary to listen to the first test case of a Chilean refugee who came to this country. It was Christmas 1973; a coup had taken place in Chile in September. I received a telephone call from a teacher — whose name I have never known, although I wish I did — to say that he had travelled across the Channel to Dover with a couple who had a tiny child. He suggested that they should get in touch with me, which he did on their behalf. The couple were called Enrico and Angelica Rodriguez. They have now settled in Costa Rica. They wanted to come to this country because Enrico, who had been working as a journalist on a newspaper in Chile, used English as his second language. He was arrested at the time of the coup. He had been in the notorious stadium and been tortured. He escaped, went to a friend, and managed not to be caught. Enrico was about 25, his wife was 21 and they had a tiny child just under one year old. They had arranged to meet in the middle of the night outside the Venezuelan embassy. At that time our embassy was not taking any refugees, but one or two were, and the Venezuelan embassy was one. They threw the baby over the wall and got into the Venezuelan embassy. Then — the Venezuelans were taking care of a lot of people — they managed to get some temporary travel documents which finally got them across the Channel to Dover, where they arrived with no proper travel documents.

They were accepted as the first test case Chilean refugees, but under the Bill they could not have gone to the British embassy in Santiago. Had Enrico gone to the embassy in Santiago, the military police would have arrested him and he would have been taken back to the stadium.

I should like to quote from *The Guardian*. The quotation is not totally relevant to the Bill, but it relates to Mr. Almeyda who was a Foreign Minister in Chile. I

[Dame Judith Hart]

remember attending a lunch which was given by the former Foreign Secretary, then Sir Alec Douglas Home, for Mr. Almeyda in 1972. Almeyda has been in Europe for many years, but he has just gone back to Chile and has been banished, under the Chilean banishment rules, to a remote region of southern Chile. I shall quote a small piece of the article by Malcolm Coad, the correspondent of *The Guardian* in Santiago:

"Friends said Mr. Almeyda had crossed into Chile on foot over a northern mountain pass from Argentina a few days earlier, and made his way to Santiago."

That is what happens when people are trying to get out and to enter this country. There is no way, when crossing mountains and making one's way out of a country which has a military régime, where torture and all sorts of atrocities are practised, in which one can set oneself up with a proper visa and travel documents by going to the British embassy to get them. Without them, the carrier will say, "I am sorry, I cannot take you, because I will be liable to a fine when I reach Britain."

The point at issue is that such people do not have the opportunity to seek political asylum. They cannot travel because they do not have proper documents and the carrier will not take them unless they have.

The sort of countries with which we might have been concerned within the past two years are Argentina, Turkey and Cambodia. I dealt with several refugees from Argentina under Galtieri who would not have reached Britain if they had had to have proper travel documents. I have also dealt with people from Turkey and Cambodia at various points.

I think that all of us will have received a paper, as I did this morning, from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, and it reinforces the point of my amendment. In one paragraph it says:

"If this Bill is passed it may cause many asylum seekers fleeing from torture and other persecution to be refused safe passage to the UK, on the grounds that they do not have the required travel documents."

The Home Secretary would be well advised to consider the point in my amendment and possibly to take account of it when the Bill reaches the other place. I do not believe that it is the right hon. Gentleman's intention to say that Britain can no longer be a refuge for people fleeing from nasty regimes. I know that the same point has been taken into account by the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) in his amendment. However, I assure the Home Secretary that his officials have not taken account of the practicalities and the desperation of people fleeing from such regimes, where it is just not possible to take a taxi to the British embassy, get out, ask for a visa, go away, come back a couple of weeks later when it is ready and then travel very properly in a way that will satisfy the carrier that he will not incur a liability. Life is not like that in these nasty countries, of which there are far too many all over the world.

I do most seriously ask the Secretary of State to take that into account and to look at the Bill again to see whether he can introduce either the precise words of my amendment or something that will satisfy the real and valid point that I am making and with which he should have no cause to disagree.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): On Second Reading I made it clear that I was not completely opposed to the principle of the Bill. It is reasonable to introduce a visa system and, having done so, it is right to try to find ways of enforcing it. On the other hand, I tried to make it clear that my view of the Bill is affected not simply by its contents but by the administrative arrangements which co-exist with it. My view of the amendments that are now under discussion is obviously coloured by the same concern.

I want not to reiterate all that I said on Second Reading but simply to remind my right hon. Friend the Minister that I said that it seemed to me regrettable that we should be moving away from arrangements set up in 1983 to make sure that people who came to Britain who were refused entry by the immigration service nevertheless had a right to some kind of review. I was not asking for a full-scale appeal system because I recognise that that could take a long time and there are good reasons for saying that this is something with which we must get on. On the other hand, to put it mildly, it would be rather a pity to lose the sort of referral mechanism that was set up in 1983. Once the Bill is enacted the number of people who might reach the point of being able to invoke such a referral system would be pretty small. Therefore, my right hon. Friend's fears about large numbers of people coming and causing considerable problems will, in reality, be unlikely to arise.

I asked for some sort of referral system, and I suggested that before somebody who has managed to reach our shores is sent away they should have the right not only to the normal interview with the immigration officer but to a quick referral either to the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or to UKIAS.

In approaching the Committee stage I tried to translate what I said on Second Reading into an amendment. It was no surprise, Sir Paul, that you declined to select it. I appreciate that it is somewhat outside the terms of the Bill's long title. However, as I say, my attitude to the various amendments that we are discussing is inevitably coloured by the sort of approach that we shall take to the parallel administrative arrangements.

Therefore, my purpose in intervening is simply to remind my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, both of whom I am glad to see on the Front Bench, that there are good grounds for saying that we in Britain should do all that we can to remain not only within the letter of the convention on refugees, which we do, but to remain in agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the acceptability of the kind of informal system of review that we have. As I said on Second Reading, when my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary spoke about the matter on 3 March, he raised the possibility that we would move away from something that was acceptable.

In my amendment, which was not selected and which, therefore, we are not discussing, I set out what seems to me to be a reasonable mechanism. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State whether he is yet in a position to tell the House whether the discussions which he said he would get under way with the UKIAS and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have yet reached a stage when he can tell us exactly what sort of arrangements he envisages will replace those that were put forward in 1983. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will be able to give us that answer today and I hope

that it will be generally acceptable. Therefore, I very much look forward to my right hon. and learned Friend's comments.

I stress that this is a matter of considerable importance and we must get the right outcome if we are to maintain our tradition of liberality in the treatment of refugees.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I want to refer in particular to amendments Nos. 10 to 13, but it might be for the convenience of the Committee if I were to make some general remarks first.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) referred to the article in *The Independent* today about the asylum-seeker found hanged. I gather from a quick phone call just before I entered the Chamber that there is a lot more to the story than appeared in the press, and it is a sad story all round. It may well be that the Minister can convince us that that case does not undermine the Government's case. But if the facts are as reported, and if the full story when it emerges is as it has been reported to me, it shows that the judgment about whether a person is entitled to be regarded as a refugee raises precisely the problems to which the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) referred.

I understand that in that particular case officials from UKIAS were following the person around. That demonstrates the need to have a proper system so that nobody falls through the net simply because of the Government's desire to deal with people firmly when they come purporting to be refugees. Whether a person is in danger or not is immaterial. The person in this case felt in danger to the extent of being prepared to take the extreme step of suicide.

My second general point about the amendments and the way in which they impinge upon the Bill relates to the costs for the organisations concerned. A letter from Sealink has been passed to me which says that it is concerned about the extra cost that will be placed upon it if the Bill is enacted. It refers to its present problems, never mind the extra ones that the Bill would place upon it. Sealink discusses the general problem of the ability of shipping lines or airlines to act as immigration officers. It refers to the case of Mr. Yatman Ho who,

"obtained a British Visitor's Card from a Post Office in Peckham and with this was able to pass through UK Customs and in and out of France. Only on his return to the UK were his papers challenged, yet we have been made responsible for repatriating him to Hong Kong. How can the ferry companies provide staff trained to the level of the Customs and Excise officers and who in addition are able to pick out documentation good enough in the case cited to fool the authorities three times."

That emphasises the problems that will be faced by the companies when trying to implement the Bill once it goes to the House. It is obvious that the Government will get the Bill through.

4.30 pm

I have studied the amendments tabled and there is not one that could be described as a wrecking amendment. All the amendments seek to apply themselves to a particular point — they are constructive. They accept that the Government will get the Bill, but urge them to consider particular problems. I do not believe that any of the amendments that have been put forward would undermine the Government's arguments for the Bill. If we are to give protection to those people who the Government say they still wish to protect I urge them to consider some of the amendments to see whether they can be accepted to improve the Bill. That is crucial.

Amendment No. 10 deals with those countries that are not signatories to the United Nations 1951 convention on refugees. There are obviously many countries that are not signatories. Two such countries are Iraq and Afghanistan. They vividly illustrate my argument. Those countries do not demonstrate assent to the United Nations convention. One can hardly expect people to accept the international convention on an equal basis when refugees come from a country that would not treat them in the same way as we profess that we would. It is a strong amendment and should be taken on board.

Unfortunately, there is always a problem in attempting to draft legislation without the resources of Government. There is an addition to the 1951 convention—the 1967 protocol. It added another list of countries to the convention, including Swaziland and the United States —one could hardly get two countries more different. If the principle of the amendment were to be accepted it would have to be redrafted to take account of those countries that were not original signatories to the convention or to the protocol.

Amendment No. 11 is better expressed by reference to the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Battersea regarding people allowed to stay. The amendment tabled by my hon. Friends and myself simply says that those eventually granted refugee status should not cause the company that carried them to be liable for a fine. The refugee status is encompassed more effectively in amendment No. 5 by the term: "given leave to remain."

I believe that Amendment No. 12 is the most important of the amendments that my hon. Friend and I have tabled. It stresses that:

"No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) where a carrier reasonably assumes that to refuse to carry would thereby place the intended passenger in danger."

There are two types of incidents that I have in mind. It may be that airline or shipping company offices find themselves in an unstable situation in certain countries. Such countries may be similar to those referred to by the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart). Perhaps some civil commotion may break out. It is clear that in such circumstances the offices of the airline or shipping company may still be operating but they may say to an intending refugee, "No, go away, we will not carry you because of the possible penalty." That would clearly put that person in danger.

The amendment includes the words "reasonably assume". Therefore, I believe that the Government should accept that one should ask the companies reasonably to assume that there would be danger in such circumstances for an intended refugee. In previous employment I have been in situations in Africa and in Bangladesh, at the end of the civil war, when everything was falling apart yet the airlines were still operating. In such circumstances such a problem as I have described may occur. Therefore, given such circumstances, it would be unreasonably harsh for an airline to say that it cannot carry someone because of the penalty.

What would happen to boat people? A ship may come across an open boat with refugees.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It would have to go straight past.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If such a ship picked up those refugees, would it mean that they would be liable to a fine? Given a strict interpretation of the Bill, that would happen and, as the Bill stands, there is no get-out for the refugees. There is no way they could get papers and there is certainly no floating embassy that they can visit in those circumstances. That situation has arisen before. If the Government do not accept that, their reputation as a bona fide signatory who uphold the international conventions would be put at risk.

Amendment No. 13 states that where an airline makes the assumption that the person could expect to have refugee status a company should be able to carry them. That judgment can be tested only in the court. The Government have inserted the word "reasonably" in the Bill and therefore they must expect that word to be tested in the courts at some time. Presumably some case law will be built up. I hope that the Government will accept a further restriction on the Bill's powers by accepting that the airlines may use their assumption that a person may be entitled to such status as a defence against the fine.

If I have to stress one amendment it is amendment No. 12 which considers the situation—it may well occur in a number of countries—where the decision not to carry would place a refugee in danger. I encourage the Government to consider these amendments.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I wish to support the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). I read the speech that he made on Second Reading and I have listened with care to the remarks that he has made today.

These are probing amendments to discover how one can sift out genuine refugees from the problem of illegal immigration. I am prepared to accept the sincerity of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State. Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend made a sincere speech when he replied to the Second Reading debate. Nevertheless, there are doubts to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury has referred.

I am chairman of the African committee of the British Refugee Council and I have had similar experience regarding African refugees to that of the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) regarding Latin American refugees. When one considers the way in which people from Uganda have been allowed to stay in Britain, although they were not refugees, it is clear that the Government have had an exceptionally good record. Nevertheless, the purpose of the amendments is to ensure that that record can be retained and maintained.

We are aware that the number of refugees involved is small, and we are also aware that many wish to return to their home countries. Indeed, many do. One of the happiest days that I have had chairing the African committee was when I learnt of the many refugees who were going back to Uganda, now governed by the new regime.

It is a question not of the numbers, nor of the number who wish to stay, but of retaining our traditional links with Africa. Our history is interwoven with the history of African countries. Our understanding of the Governments, regimes, changes and civil wars that have occurred in that continent is unique. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will listen with care to the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury. I accept that we cannot have the amendment as tabled by my right hon. Friend, but there is a strong case for some mechanism, some form of repeal or review—admittedly a rapid review—for those people who can be indentified as having a political or physical reason for seeking asylum.

Reference has already been made to the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, and it is clear from the amount of work that the foundation undertakes that there are still many extremely unpleasant regimes that are prepared to do the most bestial things to their opponents. Anyone who arrives at an airport or other port of entry who can prove physical damage should be referred immediately to an organisation such as the foundation. That will lead to verification, so that they can be allowed to enter the country without any fine being imposed. We are probing the good faith that we accept exists and the mechanism behind it to ensure that we maintain our liberal and traditional role towards refugees.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The remarks of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) reflect our continuing concern that those who seek asylum should be able to reach this country. Perhaps I should declare my interest, as I did on Second Reading, as the chairman of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

There remains much unease over the Bill, and the amendments would provide the flexibility that otherwise is lacking in the Bill as it stands. It would be scandalous—I do not think that I am exaggerating—if genuine refugees no longer had any possibility of being able to reach Britain. There is a grave danger, as the Home Secretary is aware, that those who would have been able to get to Britain will no longer be able to do so when the Bill is enacted. The various organisations that are concerned about the problem have expressed their views in letters and memoranda. Those who are fleeing for their lives are not likely to have all the necessary documents, including visas, for example. That does not happen in the real world.

Amendment No. 1, which was spoken to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart), is one of the most important amendments on the Amendment Paper. It provides that an airline should not be fined if someone arrives here without proper documentation from a country with a military Government. It is interesting that only an hour ago the Prime Minister was speaking about human rights and emphasising that the Government are committed to human rights. Her remarks were directed to the Soviet Union. Surely human rights are universal.

Mr. Corbyn: Not in the Prime Minister's mind.

Mr. Winnick: That is unfortunate. If we are committed genuinely to human rights, it makes no difference whether abuse of them occurs in the Soviet Union, elsewhere in eastern Europe or in the dictatorship countries within Africa or Asia. The principle remains the same.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale spoke eloquently of her experience with Chile. It would be wrong if those fleeing from a country such as Chile, where there is notorious abuse and denial of human rights, led to airlines being fined if they arrived in Britain without the necessary documentation. The Minister should give amendment No. 1 favourable and sympathetic attention. If someone were to arrive in Britain from any destination

and were given permission to remain in the country in a technical capacity or otherwise, the carrying airline should not be fined. Surely that makes sense.

If the amendments are accepted, they will provide the flexibility that currently is lacking. It would be wrong for the message to get out that Britain has locked its doors virtually completely to political refugees. We have a reputation to safeguard, and the Home Secretary has referred on numerous occasions, as has the Minister of State, to Britain's long and distinguished reputation and tradition in giving safety to those fleeing from political and religious tyranny. I hope that sufficient flexibility will be shown by the Minister when he replies to the amendments.

4.45 pm

Mr. Corbyn: Unfortunately, I did not hear all of the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart). I want, however, to refer to her amendment No. 1, and to a number of others, which basically go to the heart of the Bill.

We are dealing with the Government's method of turning their back completely on genuine asylum seekers from extremely oppressive countries. That is why amendment No. 1 is especially important. My right hon. Friend draws attention to the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and especially to the rapporteur countries of Afghanistan, Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala, and the Minister has agreed to give refugee status to a number of people from these countries. I know that that is a fact because I have been in correspondence with him about some of the individuals involved. I have been in correspondence with him on many occasions about those seeking refugee status in Britain who have come from oppressive regimes such as South Africa, Iran and Iraq or from numerous other places. After much correspondence, discussions and interviews with those concerned, refugee status has been granted in some instances. Exceptional need to remain has been recognised and some cases are still being argued. In other instances the individuals concerned have been removed.

In many instances the individual applying for asylum status has arrived by fraudulent means. I do not condone fraud in any sense, but the Bill does when it refers to accurate forgeries rather than inaccurate ones. Are we to assume that the Tory party in 1987 has sunk so low that it accepts forgeries provided that they are of a good class?

The Government should face the fact that people are fleeing from political oppression. For example, how is someone who believes in the right of the Kurdish people to their own homeland—in other words, the right of the Kurdish people to live in a free and independent country called Kurdistan—to travel from the Kurdish areas of Turkey to Ankara to apply to the British embassy there so as to be enabled to travel to Britain? Kurds know full well that once they expose themselves to any sort of authority at any level, especially if they apply for an airline ticket, for example, they will be arrested immediately. They know that that will happen because they are acting in contravention of the Turkish constitution, but they are merely supporting the right of Kurdish people to demand their own homeland. Even this Government have granted political asylum to people in that position.

I know of people who have arrived from the middle east with no valid papers, because they have fled from oppression. How can we expect someone who is opposed to the Government of Saddam Hussain in Iraq or that of Khomeini in Iran to travel openly, freely and safely to the capital city, where there is no functioning British embassy, to seek permission to travel to Britain? That person will have to travel to an airline office and then go openly to an airport.

The Minister knows that the only way in which some people can flee from the horrors of the Iran-Iraq war is to travel by guide across the desert of Iraq. People pay a great deal of money to cross illegally into Pakistan. They then travel on illegally, by means of a forged document, to a country that is prepared to accept them as refugees.

The Government are saying that they want to turn their back on all that. They stand condemned for their lack of respect for genuine human rights. If they are concerned about human rights, as they claim to be, they should examine the way in which those people are treated and the forms of oppression from which they come.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale mentioned certain countries earlier. I have some knowledge of the situation in El Salvador, Guatemala and Chile. I know of people who have eventually arrived in Europe, where their families were already resident as programme refugees, who escaped from Chile in frightening circumstances. They knew that to be revealed to any authority at any level would mean instant death or incarceration, possibly in a secret prison. Such people would not be able to enter this country if the Bill goes through unamended. Even if they managed to escape into Argentina or Peru and travelled to the United Kingdom, because they did not have valid documents the airline would be fined for bringing them, and they would be returned to the country from which they came.

After those people had returned to their country, the British Government could not merely wash their hands of the matter. What would happen then? I notice that amendment 10 includes a valuable provision in respect of countries that are not signatories to the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees. If the British Government support the United Nations convention on refugees and the work of UNHCR as they claim to, they should have some respect for the convention's operation, and take into account the fact that some countries have signed it and some have not.

If a country has not signed the convention, why has it not done so? Is it because it has a better system of dealing with refugees or is it because it has little regard for refugees? I do not know. I know that in the case of the Tamil asylum-seekers the Minister has got himself into a stew. He knows that many of them are genuine asylum-seekers. He has access to all the papers, unlike some of us, who have access to only some of them. He knows that the cases are genuine. That is why he backed down. He did not do so with good grace, and he has introduced this shabby little Bill to get himself off the hook.

The Minister also knows that the Tamil asylum-seekers have come via Malaysia and a stopover in Bangladesh, and that they are not the responsibility of the Bangladesh Government because, as I understand it, they were never admitted —they were merely in transit at Dhaka airport. He knows that they came from Malaysia, which is not a signatory to the convention. It has a record of returning people to Sri Lanka. People in Sri Lanka who have political differences with the Government are not welcomed at the airport and guaranteed safety. They may be arrested and put on trial, and may suffer at the hands of the authorities.

[Mr. Corbyn]

Despite all his protestations on Second Reading about support for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Minister does not support that body. Neither does he support the 1951 Geneva convention; he is turning the country's face against it.

I ask the Minister to consider the amendments carefully, particularly amendment No. 1, which goes to the heart of the problem. If he is saying that, in future, asylum applications made in this country will be accepted provided that the person has come here legitimately and legally, he is asking for the impossible in the case of the most repressive regimes. He should know that it is not possible to make an application for asylum until one is in the country concerned. One cannot apply by post from abroad, unless the Minister later tables a manuscript amendment to the Bill, but I doubt whether he will.

I hope that the House will seriously consider the amendments and the implications of the passage of the Bill. Unamended, it is nasty. It will mean that all the work done at the time of the 1951 convention and the work of the UNHCR will come to naught in this country.

I have serious fears about the remarks made by the Home Secretary and the Minister of State to the effect that they view the problem as a Europeanwide phenomenon. They have never seriously listened to the problems of refugees from other parts of the world in recent years. They intend to pile on the agony of European xenophobia, shove the refugees out and turn their backs on asylum-seekers, from whatever sort of oppression they are fleeing. They will then say that it has nothing to do with them. Shame on them. It is a disgrace. History shows that many people have sought asylum here by the most fraudulent and illegal means and I do not condemn them because they were forced into doing so. People fled here from Russia in 1905 during the pogroms against the Jews, and from Nazism. People today are fleeing from the horrors of the Iran-Iraq war and from other places. The Minister should have compassion and consider those matters before this vile little Bill is passed.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I apologise to the Committee for missing some hon. Members' speeches. Nevertheless, I should like to add my support to those hon. Members who have spoken against the Bill. I wholly endorse what has been said about the shabby, shoddy and nasty basis for this mean little measure.

The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) has been muttering during the time that I have been here, and at one stage he muttered something about most refugees being rascals. Those of us who have been concerned with refugees will admit that some of them are rascals, but the overwhelming majority of those who seek political asylum here are genuine. The fact that a person has a piece of paper that the Home Office and the immigration officers recognise as valid does not make him a rascal; nor does it mean that he is not a rascal.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): In their constituency work, all hon. Members have been told stories which, when referred to the Home Office, did not stand up to the test of truth. Not every refugee is genuine. If the argument were carried far enough, Papa Doc junior could be said to be a refugee. It is nonsense to make a blanket statement that all of the refugees who are pouring in are genuine. It is right that the Home Office should be the arbiter of each case and examine it as closely as possible. After that, the Home Office may well make a concession to the companies that fly in such people, because that would be more just than the present position.

Mr. Madden: The only person who made a blanket statement was the hon. Gentleman, when he said that all refugees were rascals. That was the statement to which I took exception, and which I challenged.

Today, I received a moving letter from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. I suppose that other members of the Committee received it, too. Its director, Mrs. Helen Bamber, said:

"If this Bill is passed it may cause many asylum seekers fleeing from torture and other persecution to be refused safe passage to the UK, on the grounds that they do not have the required travel documents.

The Medical Foundation is an independent charity working to provide medical care to people who have suffered torture and who now live as refugees in this country. Many of our patients had no choice but to escape by any means open to them, and under these circumstances were unable to obtain valid travel documents.

We have information that in countries throughout the world, from where our patients come, others face the same situation."

5 pm

The medical foundation has a group of very illustrious patrons, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Monty Finniston and Patrick Trevor-Roper. The leaflet that it sent me, under the heading,

"The practice of torture has reached epidemic proportions",

states:

"Torture is banned under International Law, yet it is reported to be practised in one-third of the countries of the world."

I underline,

"one third of the countries of the world."

The leaflet goes on:

"Methods range from extreme brutality which can result in disfigurement or death, to the sophisticated use of drugs and electricity which maximise pain but which leave few, if any, physical signs.

Many people die under torture. Many more suffer severe after effects. Most believe they will never be the same again, and that the consequences of their experience may be passed on to their children . . .

Although everyone seeking asylum in the UK is entitled to free medical care under the National Health Service, many people who have been tortured are unable to communicate their past experiences, and therefore cannot obtain the type of help which they and their families so badly need.

Some people who were tortured in the presence of doctors cannot even now approach a doctor or enter a hospital alone."

That is the reality of the epidemic proportions of torture and brutality that so many people from different nations face today in this world of ours. Some of them —I estimate a very small number— seek refuge from those regimes by attempting to come to our shores. I believe that the Bill will be an obstacle to the efforts of genuine people seeking refuge from torture and brutality to come here.

I do not believe that the provisions of the Bill are in any way justified in terms of the numbers of such people. I believe that the figures show that after the 60 or so Tamils from Sri Lanka, the numbers now coming are extremely modest. We heard on Second Reading that the numbers coming to this country are in any event substantially smaller than the numbers already settled in several other countries of Western Europe.

I do not believe that there is any justification for the Bill. Indeed, I believe that there is every reason to suspect that the Bill has been lying about in Queen Anne's Place for a very long time and that the Tamils provided a very convenient excuse for wheeling it out and trying to steamroller it through the House of Commons, with no justification, certainly in terms of the numbers of people who are seeking to secure political refuge in this country.

In its letter, the medical foundation says:

"We believe that a prompt review of all asylum applications is important but remain concerned that unless a mechanism for expert and impartial review which will include an automatic right of appeal to an independent body is established, many people may be returned to face possible torture or death . . .

I take this opportunity to stress that the Medical Foundation is an organisation which adheres to the principles of impartiality consistent with established medical ethics. It limits its concerns to victims of torture and has no position on the broader issue of immigration."

I think that we should heed that view from this very reputable and respectable organisation which has dedicated itself for a very long time to helping those who have suffered at the hands of the torturers of this world. The Government should listen to what it says, even at this late hour. I believe that the Bill should be withdrawn. If not, certainly these amendments should be accepted.

Mr. Corbyn: I accept what my hon. Friend says about the need to deal with asylum applications very quickly, but he must understand that this is not always possible. Does he think it would be useful if the Government gave an automatic right of exceptional leave to remain while an application was pending? At the moment a large number of these applicants are being held in custody. In one case that is coming up, the applicant has been a full year in custody.

The Second Deputy Chairman: I would just remind the hon. Member and the Committee that this debate must not widen out into a general debate on immigration. It must be linked to the Bill, which concerns the liability of carriers.

Mr. Madden: I accept what you say, Sir Paul.

I agree entirely with the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

I would ask the Minister, when replying to the debate, to confirm or deny newspaper reports about the outcome of the inquiries into the Tamil cases. We have been told that at least half of those people are going to be accepted as political refugees and given permission to remain here. If so, it makes the position of the Government on those cases even more extraordinary and subject to criticism. It would be extremely helpful if the Minister could give us some information on the present situation on the Tamil applications, which are the only justification to which he has ever pointed for this mean and nasty little Bill.

The medical foundation has made a number of recommendations, which are supported by a large number of other organisations concerned with this kind of matter, as to what it believes should be the basis for a humane and civilised approach by a humane and civilised Government to these matters. The recommendations are:

"That the definition of a refugee should include anyone who is in danger of torture or persecution in their country of origin, irrespective of whether or not he has been formally recognised as a refugee.

That no one should be excluded from being considered a refugee on the grounds that he does not possess the required travel documents.

That refugees should be recognised as a distinct group separate from immigrants or any other group."

The foundation then quotes a recommendation of the Third Report from the Home Affairs Committee in the 1984-85 Session, as follows:

"We see a need for a clearer distinction between refugees and immigrants, both in the procedures they go through . . . and in the public perception. We have already noted our greater legal and moral obligation towards refugees."

The medical foundation's recommendations continue:

"That just and humanitarian procedures be established to determine whether or not a person seeking asylum is a refugee; that these procedures be established in consultation with independent expert bodies, such as UNHCR, UKIAS, British Refugee Council and Amnesty International; that these procedures should work quickly but should maintain adequate legal safeguards; that anyone stating that they are a refugee, or seeking asylum, should be given leave to remain while they make their asylum application; that anyone claiming asylum should have access to legal representation and medical advice of their own choice; that decisions on all asylum applications should be reached in the light of comprehensive information on the situation in the applicant's country of origin; that an automatic right of appeal to an independent body before removal should be established".

Again, this refers to the 1984-85 Home Affairs Committee report. The final recommendation is:

"that no asylum applicant should be removed until all the appeal procedures open to him have been exhausted; that all cases considered 'manifestly unfounded' or 'clearly abusive' should be entitled to an independent review before removal."

In my view, that represents a clear, concise, humanitarian approach to these policies. I only wish that the Government had adopted such a posture instead of bringing forward this nasty, mean little Bill.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): I think that we ought to be grateful to all the hon. Members who have spoken, and especially to my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), because they have identified some very important matters. I will deal first with specific points raised by right hon. and hon. Members and then come back to the specific amendments.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said that we are likely to be in breach of the United Nations convention. I really do not think that he can believe that. If we are to be in breach of that convention as a result of passing this measure, we shall certainly be in good company because legislation similar to this is already in place in Australia, Canada, the United States, Germany, New Zealand and Brazil, and at the present time a working group of officials in the European Community is considering how best similar legislation could be put in place in other Community countries. It must be nonsense to say that all the countries that pass this legislation are in breach of the United Nation's convention. Certainly that has never been said by the UNHCR.

I ought to deal immediately with a serious and sad matter—the death of a Ugandan citizen. An inquest is to be held on 16 April into his death. I do not think, therefore, that it would be right for me or, indeed, any hon. Member to comment in detail on the circumstances of his case other than to emphasise that it is clearly a tragic event from which it is far too early to draw any proper conclusions. Clearly, his death has nothing whatsoever to do with the Bill, because he was a Ugandan citizen who came here with a valid Ugandan passport.

I should like to deal with the points made by the right hon. Member for Clydesdale, (Dame J. Hart). She chided us for not living in the real world and for not taking

[Mr. David Waddington]

account of how people really get out of other countries and seek asylum, yet every example she quoted disproved the case she was making and proved the case we are making.

Dame Judith Hart: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Waddington: I wonder whether the right hon. Lady would just listen to the points I am making in answer to her points and then, of course, I shall give way.

The right hon. Lady quoted the example of Afghanistan. But how, in fact, do people take refuge from Afghanistan? They certainly do not get out of that country by going to Kabul airport with forged documents and get on an aeroplane to come to this country. They walk over the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan and seek refuge in Pakistan. If they claim a family connection in this country, they go to our embassy in Islamabad and try to establish a claim to come here because of that connection. Therefore, the circumstances in Afghanistan have nothing to do with the Bill.

The right hon. Lady then quoted the example of Chile, yet that example proves the case that the Government are making and completely disproves the case she is making. The right hon. Lady forgets what has happened in Chile. In November 1973, under the then Conservative Government, the United Kingdom responded to an international burden-sharing appeal launched by the UNHCR. Between 1973 and October 1979 the Home Office considered some 14,000 applications for resettlement in this country by Chileans. Some 4,000 Latin Americans, predominantly Chileans, had been accepted by the end of that programme. That is how people from Chile have obtained refuge here. They have not got here by forging documents and presenting themselves at airports in central or southern America. They have got here as a result of going to our posts in south or central America and have been accepted for settlement here as a result of the very generous programme evolved by the United Kingdom.

The right hon. Lady then quoted the example of El Salvador. Again, she could not have picked a worse example. I have checked and found that there was not a single case of a citizen of El Salvador claiming asylum in this country last year. That is scarcely surprising. I should have thought that it was difficult to find any El Salvadorean citizen in this country with whom someone now in El Salvador would wish to seek refuge. It is difficult to think of examples of big El Salvadorean communities in this country such that people in El Salvador would look to Britain as a country of refuge rather than to other countries. I should have thought that Britain was almost the last country in the world which would be the natural country of refuge for people of El Salvador.

The right hon. Lady then quoted the example of Guatemala. Again she proved our case rather than hers. I have checked in this case as well. During the last year for which figures are available only one person from Guatemala was granted asylum. I have not had time to check whether that was a case of someone arriving here with forged documents, but I very much doubt that it was. That again shows that this country is not considered by anyone as the natural country of refuge for citizens of Guatemala.

5.15 pm

I think that I caught the point which the right hon. Lady was making about the 2 million Chileans now in Costa Rica who were in Venezuela. Again, she proved our point, not hers. Clearly, those people took refuge in at least one other country before applying to come here, so certainly they would not be left stranded and subject to persecution as a result of the Bill's passage.

Dame Judith Hart: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being extraordinarily obtuse, if he will forgive my saying so. I quoted those examples as being the countries apparently subject to reports by the special rapporteur of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. That was the point of the list of countries I gave the right hon. and learned Gentleman. If, indeed, there is no reason to suppose that we would have any refugees from Afghanistan, El Salvador or Guatemala, there is no reason why the right hon. and learned Gentleman need not accept my amendment, because it will not have any significant effect on the Government.

On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's last point, I did not refer to people coming from Venezuela. I said that they sought refuge in the embassy in Venezuela, in San Diego, from which they were given temporary travel documents. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to tell me about the experience, with particular reference to Chile, of the 4,000 refugees who came to Britain between January 1974 and 1979. He is talking about the Chilean refugee programme for which I and my hon. Friends then in the Home Office were directly responsible, and I think that I may be allowed to know a little more about that than he does.

Mr. Waddington: If the right hon. Lady knows all about it, as I am sure she does, she would know perfectly well that those people did not come here with forged documents. Therefore, when she quotes the case of the Chileans, she makes a most interesting speech, but it has nothing to do with the Bill.

Dame Judith Hart: Because many of those Chilean refugees were escaping from a military regime, so that they had to get out in whatever way they could, they came with documents that would not have satisfied carriers under the Bill. Therefore, carriers would have been unlikely to accept the liability of bringing them here. That is the essence of my amendment.

Mr. Waddington: The right hon. Lady is entirely wrong. Those who came under the Chilean programme had already been accepted for settlement in this country before they set out. I do not know why she keeps pressing this point. The more she presses it, the more she makes our case. When dealing with a couple of Chileans, she said that they had gone to France. Plainly, if they had, this country was not their first country of refuge.

Mr. Corbyn: Because the Chilean refugee programme has concluded, if a person wishes to seek refuge in this country, he cannot apply abroad for political asylum—that is obvious — and, therefore, it is unlikely that someone who opposes the Government of Pinochet would be allowed to travel freely to this country. The carrier would be suspicious about carrying him because of the danger of being fined, under the Bill, if that person sought political asylum when he reached here. How does the Bill accommodate such people?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman said, incorrectly, that such a person could not apply abroad to come here, but such a person could.

I shall deal now with the important point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury and the similar point put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). I hope that my comments will give considerable comfort to my right hon. Friend. We have not yet had time to embark on discussions with the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service. In proposing a revision of the UKIAS referral system it is not our intention to abolish it or greatly to reduce its scope. Far from it. The system was established in 1983 in a situation very different from what we have experienced over the past two years and especially the last three months.

Our objective in discussing the matter with UKIAS will be a modification of the system to meet new problems that have emerged. In doing so we shall need to take into account the effect of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill on the number of asylum applications made at the ports. It may prove possible to devise an arrangement, in consultation with UKIAS, that will enable cases of port asylum application to be referred to it, if necessary within short deadlines. I hope that my right hon. Friend will understand how difficult it is to have discussions of this kind in the time available. I hope that we shall be embarking on those discussions before long.

In answer to the point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), perhaps we can leave until later the question of the cost that could be incurred by shipping companies because there is an amendment on the Notice Paper that deals with Channel ferries.

Mr. Ho was referred to in a letter from Sealink, in which a complaint was made about the operation of the Immigration Act. I understand what it is saying but its complaint is not strictly relevant to this debate. In this Bill we are not seeking to depart from, but to build upon, existing principles and policy.

Mr. Meadowcroft: By extension, if that company had difficulty under the present rule in spotting the legality or illegality of the documents, it will have greater difficulty in spotting whether documents are valid under the new rules.

Mr. Waddington: I do not think so. The hon. Gentleman mentioned sea rescues. We have had to consider this because of the dramatic events that have happened as a result of people leaving Vietnam. The internationl community arrived at an agreement called RASRO, which is really a burden-sharing arrangement. No longer is there any disincentive to a sea captain to pick up people at sea or any disincentive to the country to which the ship is first going because of this burden-sharing arrangement. But in practice, if a ship is in the China sea, it would wire through to Hong Kong, its next port of call, to say that it has got this cargo of refugees on board. It would get clearance from the Hong Kong authorities for the landing of that cargo of refugees. Under the burden-sharing arrangement there would be no obstacle to those refugees being received in Hong Kong or elsewhere.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Should not the Minister recognise and explain in his answer that this Bill is wholly discretionary? Therefore, would not the circumstances in which a carrier picks up people such as those mentioned by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) be part of a process of deciding whether there was guilt or negligence, or otherwise, in the actions of the carrier?

Mr. Waddington: My hon. Friend is right and I will come to that point later in a slightly different context. These penalties do not have to be imposed in any event but there is this extra safeguard and means of satisfying the hon. Gentleman because of the very important international arrangement that was arrived at.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister moving on to the question of airports and civil disobedience as well as the boat people? I ask him to answer that before I intervene again.

Mr. Waddington: Would the hon. Gentleman put the question again?

Mr. Meadowcroft: My question concerned people who were in danger, for instance, at Dhaka airport during the Bangladesh civil war, or at Entebbe or Khartoum, when tribal conflict was growing. At Dhaka, the airlines were still operating, but Hindus were in great danger if they were turned out of an airline's airport office. The Minister, in relation to people found on the open sea and especially those who are in danger at an airport, is making a case for acceptance of amendment No. 12 rather than saying that the Government rely on discretion.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Member is making out a case for the abolition of passports and visas.

Mr. Meadowcroft: No, I am not.

Mr. Waddington: Yes, indeed. If there was a visa requirement before the passage of this Bill, the same problem that the hon. Member has identified could arise. Obstacles to international travel exist already as a result of the need for documents or visas. The international community, when these tragic events occur of the kind described by the hon. Member, usually rally around, and we have been very supportive.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Could I put the case once more about Bangladesh? I was present towards the end of that civil war, where the dangers I have described could have been the case, conceivably, day by day. The Hindus feared the threat from west Pakistan and the forces that were fighting a war there. Thinking that their lives were threatened, they managed to get to Dhaka airport or some other airport. They do not want to come directly here, but they may want to go to Calcutta, a third country, from which they might come here, without any papers. Yet war is raging outside. How can we say to those people that there are ways and means of dealing with this problem unless the airlines can say that the refugees are in danger of life and limb if they go outside the airport or airport office? Why do we not accept that potential danger and accept amendment No. 12?

Mr. Waddington: It is possible to put forward hypothetical cases but I am surely right in the answer that I gave. One could make out a hypothetical case that, given the present state of the law, before the passage of this Bill, people could find themselves in exactly the same position because an airline might refuse to carry them because they did not have a passport or a visa. The hon. Gentleman must not forget that we are building on existing sanctions on carriers. Carriers who now bring people without the

[Mr. Waddington]

appropriate documentation have to address their minds to the question whether the person being carried will be refused entry. Carriers know that if they carry people without appropriate documents, and the person is refused entry and detained, the carrier might have to pay the detention cost and the cost of returning that person to the country from which he has come.

We do not believe that the existing sanctions are deterring all the airlines sufficiently. They have not prevented in December and January of this year 800 people arriving at our airports with either forged or mutilated documents. The vast majority of those people could not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as refugees.

Mr. Madden: Is the Minister not concerned about placing responsibilities for checking whether passengers have appropriate and genuine travel documents? Will he consider the case of British citizens by descent who have a right to come here, claim entry, and, if refused, to stay pending appeal? Is he prepared to accept that airlines can refuse to such people a right to come to this country when they clearly have that right? Does the Minister accept that this Bill will put that right in jeopardy?

Mr. Waddington: Our posts abroad are perfectly able to make common-sense decisions. It is clear that, even since the introduction of the visa regime for the four countries in the Indian subcontinent, Ghana last autumn, and Nigeria now, they are capable of saying in compassionate cases that persons can come.

5.30 pm

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that many asylum-seekers have come by fraudulent means. I do not doubt that for one moment, but that is not the point. The point is whether many genuine refugees have come by fraudulent means. That is the point to which we must address our minds. I do not want to bore the Committee by going over again the history that I gave on Second Reading of the true circumstances in which refugees have been arriving in this country over the years.

The hon. Gentleman asked how Kurds can be expected to go to Ankara. With respect, they do not, and one would not expect them to go to Ankara. They go over the border into Iraq. Sometimes they go on from Iraq to Iran. The hon. Gentleman might have been a little generous to the Home Office for once because he knows perfectly well that recently we allowed quite a large number of Kurds to come here from a refugee camp in Iran because we took the view, as a result of representations made to us, that the conditions there were so appalling that they should have the opportunity to come to Britain.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand that that group came, and obviously it is good that those people were able to do so and that they were accepted here. However, my point is simply this. Under the Bill, unless someone has reached the capital city of one of those countries and made his own arrangements to travel, it would be impossible for him to get here because no carrier would take him unless he revealed himself to authority. Such people would then be rendered vulnerable in the eyes of the authorities concerned. As the Minister accepts that there is a legitimate case for Kurdish asylum-seekers to come from Iran, Iraq or Turkey—whichever country they are from—he must concede that the Bill will prevent them from coming in the future.

Mr. Waddington: It is difficult to envisage circumstances in which, if those people could not get to a British post abroad, they would be able to get to an airport. On the other hand, one would have thought that if they could get to an airport, they could get to a British post abroad, which is one of the points that I have made on several occasions about people travelling from the north of Sri Lanka to Colombo. It has always been rather difficult to see why those people should have been able to get to an airport and not to the British high commission in Colombo.

The purpose of all the amendments is to relieve carriers of liability for bringing passengers here without documents. Separately and together, they would drive a coach and horses through the Bill. They would create increasingly wide exemptions to the principles of the Bill in an increasingly wide variety of circumstances. They would drill so many holes in the bucket that little could be retained in it.

There is no doubt about the inherent value of the Bill. The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) made our case for us because he conceded that, since the Bill was published and since we announced that carriers bringing people here would be liable to penalties from midnight on 4 March, the number of people being brought here with forged and mutilated documents or without documents has decreased enormously. So I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making our case for us.

Mr. Winnick: The Minister states, falsely in my opinion, that my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has made the case for the Government, but will the right hon. and learned Gentleman concentrate on the question which I, together with some of my hon. Friends, asked? There is a danger that if the Bill is as effective as the right hon. and learned Gentleman states it will be, it will mean that some people who otherwise would have been able to come will no longer be able to do so. For example, if it is found that of the 58 Tamils a number—a majority or otherwise—are genuinely in fear, according to all the criteria, of being sent back to the country from which they came, surely, if anything, the Bill will make it much more difficult for such people to come here.

Mr. Waddington: I will not be drawn into the case of the Tamils because of the undertaking given by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The hon. Gentleman knows that it would be improper for me to do so. However, it is perfectly proper for me to remind the Committee that those who go from one country, to which they say they are frightened of returning, to another have the opportunity to seek refuge in the first country to which they go. It by no means follows that because somebody in this country is in fear of returning to the country that he first left this country is the appropriate country of refuge for him.

The deterrent value of the Bill would be largely lost if there were to be savings in all the various cases. Amendments Nos. 2, 11 and 5 deal with people who are eventually given exceptional leave to remain, leave to remain or refugee status. Carriers would have no means

of knowing until some time after the person arrived in this country whether they would be liable to a charge. Some might take a chance and live in hope.

As to amendment No. 6, liability would be suspended for people who were required to leave but went to ground —who did a disappearing trick. Nothing could be more ridiculous than that. In practice, carriers would not have brought home to them their responsibilities in a large number of cases where asylum was claimed or a person otherwise continued to remain here and no final decision was made or, sometimes perhaps, could be made in that person's case.

A claim for payment made many months later, even if the facts of the case could be then established and tested, would have no impact on the immediate problems of the ports, which is what caused us to introduce the Bill. Furthermore, once people manage to reach our shores, in practice it is difficult to remove them, irrespective of the merits of their case. The amendments would be an invitation to the continual exploitation of our asylum system and would do nothing to deal with the serious problems with which we have been faced.

Amendments Nos. 2, 11 and 5 would also have the very effect on carriers that the Opposition have been saying they would be most concerned to avoid. They would encourage the carriers to try to act as immigration officers. Instead of carriers being required only to look at passports, they would be invited to decide whether, for instance, people were qualified for asylum. The Bill's simple and straightforward proposals require no more of carriers than that they should check that passengers have the proper documents, but the amendments appear unreasonably to expect them to form a judgment on whether a person seeking to come here without valid documents would be likely to claim asylum and would be allowed to remain in this country. Moreover, the amendments would create uncertainty which would amount, in effect, to no more than a lottery. Under the Bill as drafted, the carrier's liability is clear, but under the amendments the carrier would have no idea whether it would be liable in any case until a passenger had arrived here and a decision had been made on whether he should be allowed to stay.

We get into deeper waters when we come to amendments Nos. 10 and 1. The proposals to relieve carriers of liability for passengers coming from countries that are not signatories to the United Nations convention —which is amendment No. 10, spoken to by the hon. Member for Leeds, West — or from countries with a military Government or subject to reports by a special rapporteur—which is the amendment spoken to by the right hon. Member for Clydesdale — would have the additional effect of exempting the carrier from liability before the passenger begins to travel to this country. They imply, of course, that we in the United Kingdom accept that people from these countries are more likely to be entitled to stay here than people who have come from other countries.

Dame Judith Hart: Why not?

Mr. Waddington: I will tell the right hon. Lady why not. It is because one of the countries that comes within amendment No. 10, moved by the hon. Member for Leeds, West, is India. We have recently put a visa requirement on citizens of India. Therefore, in the same breath that we are saying that we will put visa requirements on the nationals of India, we should be saying that they have a special privilege to come here because we assume that they would be far more likely to be having a miserable life and facing danger than people living in other countries. I cannot imagine a greater nonsense than that.

We do not make judgments as to whether to put visa requirements on a country's nationals on the basis suggested by the right hon. Lady. We have not said that we will not put a visa requirement on some nationals where there is no military regime, but we will not put a visa requirement on other nationals simply because there is a military regime. In fact, the list of visa nationals shows that in the days of both the Labour and Conservative Governments what actually happened does not support the right hon. Lady's case.

To be fair to the countries concerned, I must say that it does not follow that a country that has not signed the United Nations convention will fail to protect refugees. Every state, on achieving membership of the United Nations, is obliged, inter alia, to subscribe to the mandate of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The mandate, in effect, contains the same element of protection for refugees and asylum-seekers as the convention. The convention simply builds on to the mandate in more specific terms such matters as social rights and the right to work. Indeed, the UNHCR is commonly represented with the consent of Governments in states that are not party to the convention and that accommodate asylum-seekers — for example, Pakistan in respect of Afghan refugees and India in respect of Tamils from Sri Lanka. In the case of countries that are not party to the convention—for example, almost all the iron curtain countries — refugees come to this country under orderly and properly documented arrangements. There is no purpose in singling out for different treatment under the Bill countries that are not signatories to the United Nations convention.

Amendments Nos. 12 and 13, tabled by the hon. Member for Leeds, West, would relieve a carrier of liability where he

"reasonably assumes that to refuse to carry would thereby place the intended passenger in danger"

or whom he

"could reasonably expect to be entitled to refugee status".

Both amendments are unacceptable. How could we expect a carrier to form a view on that? It would create a very odd state of affairs, not least because there would be no means of testing whether a carrier really assumed that an intended passenger would be in danger or really did think that the passenger would be entitled to refugee status.

We cannot ask or expect carriers to make delicate and sensitive judgments about the circumstances of individual passengers and whether they are in real danger or have a reasonable expectation of refugee status. Even if they did say, to escape the penalty, that they had made that judgment, there would be no way of testing whether they had made an honest judgment.

It is not reasonable to expect people at check-in desks to make immediate assumptions about such matters. How could that assumption be tested? The result would be that, to protect themselves, carriers would accept any passenger who claimed to be in danger or to be a refugee. The carrier need only say that he thought that he had made a reasonable assumption to relieve himself of liability under the Bill. The deterrent of the Bill would be completely lost. Moreover, it is not clear what is meant by the term

[Mr. Waddington]

"danger". It goes far wider than the circumstances envisaged under the 1951 convention. Does it mean immediate danger, danger in the next month, in the next year or at some unspecified time in the future?

5.45 pm

The amendments are objectionable on several counts, including those which concern the decisions made on or after entry, because they would undermine the whole aim of the Bill, which is to prevent people travelling to this country without the proper documents. The amendments would encourage carriers to make judgments that they could not reasonably make and they would leave carriers uncertain about the extent of their liability while they waited, perhaps for some months, while decisions were made on matters that might only partially be affected by the original circumstances of the journey.

Because the amendments would relieve carriers of liability where they reasonably assumed that a passenger was in danger or that a person would be accepted as a refugee, they therefore also assume that carriers can make judgments or assumptions that they are manifestly not equipped to make, and further assume that in some way their claim that they made such an honest judgment could be subsequently tested. Therefore, I must invite the Committee to reject all the amendments.

Mr. Dubs: The Minister's speech was disappointing. I am sure that other hon. Members share that view. He said that he was not prepared to discuss the case of the Tamils. I put it to him, as I have done before, that it is clear that one or more of the 64 Tamils would be regarded as mandatory refugees under the United Nations convention to which we are signatories. Had they been removed, as the Home Secretary intended, we would clearly have been in breach of that convention——

Mr. Waddington: I take it that the hon. Gentleman is asking me a question. The reply must be that he is not entitled to assume that any of the Tamils—whether one, two or 15 — are refugees. I do not make that assumption, and the hon. Gentleman is not entitled to make that assumption.

Mr. Dubs: I do not make that assumption either. I have discussed the matter with the London representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and I was quoting what he said. I did not reach that view on my own because, clearly, I do not have the necessary information. If the Minister says that the London office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is wrong, so be it. However, I prefer its view to that of the Minister.

Every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate on this set of amendments has criticised the Government's policy. Each has felt uneasy about the fact that we are simply closing doors on people and that we are not going to allow them to state their case. The Minister should take greater note of the views expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. That view is not held just by Members of the Labour and alliance parties. Some Conservative Members have expressed unease about the Bill and have asked for assurances. In the absence of any assurance from the Minister, I urge the Committee to support amendment No. 2.

Mr. Raison: I was encouraged by the tone of the response of my right hon. and learned Friend to the specific point that I raised on Second Reading. I hope that he will continue along the lines that he indicated then and will come to the conclusions outlined in my amendment, which was not selected.

It will help if, in addition to the discussions to be held with UKIAS, the Minister will discuss the matter with the representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I will be happy if he can come up with a solution that matches recommendation No. 8 of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees executive committee, which was referred to in the Home Office evidence. That recommendation was referred to in the Home Office evidence. If my right hon. Friend can meet that point, my anxiety will be greatly relieved.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 96, Noes 184.

Division No. 127] **[5.50 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'fermline E)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Leadbitter, Ted
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beel, Keith

Bevan, David Gilroy
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Crouch, David
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heyward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk N)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stam'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Richard Ryder

Question accordingly negatived.

6 pm

Mr. Dubs: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of any person who is shown to be covered by the Secretary of State's guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases.'.

This amendment is specifically concerned with the relationship between the Bill and the Home Secretary's guidelines on the representations of Members of Parliament in immigration cases. The Committee knows that for some time the Government have tried to reduce the power of Members of Parliament to make representations in a whole range of immigration cases. There is a relationship between that issue and the Bill. The Government are seeking to go back on their undertaking regarding exceptional cases under which Members of Parliament would still be allowed to make representations, especially on behalf of people who come from visa countries.

The issue has dragged on for some time. The Government have made a series of attempts to tighten the guidelines, and on 6 November 1986 the Home Secretary announced certain changes to the guidelines, which made provision for exceptional circumstances. The Home Secretary said that action to remove the passenger would be deferred only

"if at the time of intervention the Member demonstrates that there are exceptional and compelling circumstances (eg recent bereavement or sudden grave illness here in the immediate family)."—[*Official Report*, 6 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 540.]

In other words, as recently as last November the Home Secretary allowed for the fact that if people arrived without the proper documents in this country Members of Parliament would be allowed to intervene. If the Home Secretary had kept to the spirit of the answer that I have just read out, he would not be introducing this Bill. It cannot be denied that the Bill goes completely against the spirit of the agreement about representations by Members of Parliament.

The amendment seeks an exception with regard to fines if the circumstances are identical with or similar to those that are covered by the guidelines for Members of Parliament. If the exception was good enough last November and allowed Members of Parliament to intervene on behalf of constituents, the same exception ought to be good enough to be included as an amendment to the Bill. It is a modest and reasonable amendment. If it is not agreed to, the Home Secretary will be reneging on the undertaking that was given to the House as recently as last November.

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I share the concern of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs)

[Mr. Geoff Lawler]

about the assurance that was given in the parliamentary answer that he quoted. If, for example, after a death in my constituency a telegram was sent to Pakistan which arrived late on Thursday after the embassy's immigration office in Islamabad had closed, the family might be unable to obtain visas to come to this country until the following Sunday. By the time they were able to catch a plane it might be Monday or even Tuesday, so there could be a gap of four days between the death and the arrival of the family in this country.

In his answer, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary gave an assurance that provision would be made for this when the visa requirement was introduced. Between the introduction of the visa requirement on 15 October and 7 March, 1,052 people were refused entry at Heathrow or Gatwick. They had come from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh without valid visas or, in a few cases, with visas that were not considered to be genuine. My right hon. Friend is right to introduce this curb on airlines to prevent a significant number of people being carried to this country and then refused admission, because in the long run the only people who will be affected by the abuse of the procedure are genuine applicants.

I shall oppose the amendment of the hon. Member for Battersea because that is not the way to deal with the matter. If it were agreed to, somebody in this country might send a telegram to a friend or a relation abroad—for example, in Pakistan—and say, "Come quickly, your mother has died". That person would then turn up at the airline desk with the telegram as evidence of bereavement. The airline official would be in no position to judge whether the telegram was genuine.

I hope, however, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State will consider this point. I suggest that instead of the amendment an emergency procedure should be made available at our posts overseas and that an officer with responsibility for the issue of visas should always be on duty. On a Friday or Saturday in Pakistan, for example, when the embassy is closed a visa could then be obtained in an emergency. An immigration officer is in a much better position than an official at an airport desk in Islamabad, Delhi or Dhaka to judge whether an application is genuine. It is a question not of amending the Bill but of instituting new procedures to cope with the problem. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will consider my suggestion.

Mr. Corbyn: The Bill further erodes the right of Members of Parliament to intervene in immigration and refugee cases. It is important that Members of Parliament should be able to do something on behalf of relatives of their constituents or, indeed, on behalf of people who are in distress at an airport or port of entry. I receive calls frequently from people who do not have either relatives or connections in my constituency but who nevertheless want the assistance of the Member of Parliament. The Bill takes away that right.

When the right of appeal was discussed at the 34th executive session of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Government's response was that one of the ways that an asylum seeker could have his case discussed in this country was precisely by appealing to a Member of Parliament. It was one of the basic arguments against the recommendation of the UNHCR and of the recommendations of the Select Committee that dealt with the Vietnamese refugees. The Government have now gone a stage further and removed that right. I strongly recommend amendment No. 3. Unless there is to be some way of examining the case of an asylum seeker at the port of entry, rather than simply handing it over to immigration officers — the course implicit in the Bill — or privatising the service by handing responsibility over to the carrier, who may or may not be fined in respect of it, Members of Parliament have to be involved.

Under the Bill—unless I have misunderstood it—a would-be asylum seeker who had actually managed to get a passage on a plane and made application at the port of entry would have his case decided by immigration officers at that port of entry. The carrier would then be fined accordingly. Carriers are likely to be nervous about taking passengers when they may then have to return them and pay a fine, so, in effect, the Government are washing their hands of the matter. They are preventing Members of Parliament even from knowing what goes on, still less being able to protect the human rights of the individual concerned, who will be ejected from this country.

It is essential for Members of Parliament to have the right to handle cases so that, when necessary, they can put a stop to the removal of a person and ensure that the Minister can examine the case carefully and fully. I am sure that the Minister—even though he is rather bullet-headed about the Bill—must at least concede that many of the cases previously referred to him by hon. Members could not be so referred under the terms of the Bill. Under the Bill, many of those cases in which exceptional leave to remain, leave to remain or refugee status have been granted would simply never have been brought to his attention because people would never have got here in the first place. Hon. Members' right to intervene is an important long-stop.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) spoke against the amendment on the ground that there could be abuse, and he gave an example. I have been provoked by his remarks because it would be unfortunate if the principle, whether the amendment should stand, was determined according to cases of abuse.

I understand that the hon. Gentleman is to become a member of the general council of UKIAS. Like that organisation, I am certainly not in the business of condoning abuse. I have never been that way inclined and I am not likely to change my mind now. The hon. Gentleman should understand that an important principle is involved.

I remind the House of the argument advanced by the Home Office in reply to the recommendation of the Race Relations and Immigration Sub-Committee that, in principle, there should be an appeals system. As I said on Second Reading, although I broadly sympathise with such a system, I recognise some of the problems that would arise from it and that would undoubtedly increase the number of people involved. I understand the arguments against an appeals system, although I am broadly in favour of having one.

The Home Office emphasis was clear. It said that there was no need for such an appeals system because there was already an effective form of referral, which it outlined in a written response to the Sub-Committee. It said that there

were other adequate safeguards, such as representations by Members of Parliament, judicial review and the referral procedures of the UKIAS.

6.15 pm

I welcome the Minister of State's remarks on the previous set of amendments about the discussions with UKIAS. I hope that means that there will eventually be very little undermining of the referral system. I realise that that will be the subject of discussions between the hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues in the Home Office and UKIAS.

It would be most unfortunate if anything were done to undermine the rights of hon. Members to make representations. It seems reasonable, where representations are being made by a Member of Parliament, that there should be no liability on the airline. I see no reason why my hon. Friend should withdraw the amendment, which is very much in line with the point made by the Home Office in rejecting the need for an appeals system as recommended by the Conservative-dominated Race Relations and Immigration Sub-Committee. If the House of Commons decided at the time that that was an adequate response, the Government are now eroding and undermining their own arguments against an appeals system.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I was a member of the Committee that reported on Vietnamese refugees, and I have always held the view that we must consider carefully what happens to refugees. When the report was sent to the Home Office, it replied that there were adequate safeguards in the form of judicial review —that can only apply where a person is actually in the country — and representations by Members of Parliament. Tragically the right of Members of Parliament has been curtailed by the November guidelines. It is indeed a sad day when the Government seek to restrict the rights of hon. Members.

It is sad that exceptional and difficult cases are once more being impeded in their progress towards resolution. I am the first to admit that if people break the rules and want to cheat, we must deter or catch them, but many refugees are human beings fleeing for their lives.

The amendment would make exceptions when Members of Parliament are involved in cases. The integrity of hon. Members has never been called into question, so why do not the Government accept the amendment? Do they suggest that a Government Department always knows best and that sometimes hon. Members have no right to a say?

Mr. Waddington: Clearly we are not expected to take the amendment literally, and I shall not take any silly drafting point, because I think that I know what is behind the proposal. Of course, if the amendment were taken literally, no liability would ever arise under the Bill, as the guidelines apply to all immigration cases. We therefore start from the standpoint that the amendment is nonsense and does not mean what it says.

As I understand it, the intention is that liability should be removed from a carrier if a Member of Parliament can show that compelling or exceptional circumstances have prevented the passenger from obtaining a visa. My objection is that the amendment would lead to additional and unnecessary complications and would appear to allow the carrier's responsibility to be removed solely because a Member of Parliament had decided to make representations in the case. That would be somewhat extraordinary. It would open up a loophole because carriers would be under great pressure to accept the urgency of a passenger's journey on his say-so alone. It would be wholly unreasonable to put carriers under such pressure and that course would be bound to lead to exploitation by people trying to enter this country without the proper documents.

In practice—this meets the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler)—there is no reason why a passenger should not be able to get a visa if he or she needs one, even at the shortest notice. Passengers will normally have to travel through a major centre to join an international flight and we have visa-issuing officers in all the major departure points for the United Kingdom. The applications are dealt with immediately when circumstances are urgent, and outside office hours the duty officers, who are available at all times at British missions abroad, can issue visas in desperate cases. I hope that my hon. Friend will spread that message round his constituency. It was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when we debated visas last autumn.

Mr. Madden: Are there special arrangements for emergency cases? Normally applications for visitors' visas are extremely lengthy. I am sure that the Minister, like me, has looked at the application forms which run to 30 or 40 extremely detailed questions. I assume that in an emergency case that procedure is not followed. In an emergency, where does a person obtain an application form? Are people expected to fill out such a detailed form? If they are, how can that be done in an emergency?

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that it is entirely misleading to talk about applications for visas being extremely lengthy. We debated this only the other day. He was one of the hon. Members who spread scare stories around the House when we debated visas. The hon. Gentleman talked the most irresponsible nonsense when he spoke about delays of a year or two years for a visitor visa. He behaved in a thoroughly irresponsible way then. He knows perfectly well that visas are being issued within 24 hours in 95 per cent. of cases and in a matter of a few days in the other cases. He is compounding the irresponsibility that he showed in our earlier debate by now pretending that there is some enormously lengthy process involved in applying for a visitor visa when there certainly is not.

The hon. Gentleman heard what I said in answer to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North and I shall repeat what has been said. Emergency services are available at all our overseas posts near international airports. We are talking about people who often have to travel a long way to get to those airports. It is entirely misleading to suggest that people who are able to get to those international airports should find any difficulty in getting to one of our overseas posts and using the emergency services available there to apply for a visa as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): May we take it that there will be no interference and no blocking of representations made by hon. Members when, as in cases that I have encountered, people come from the Punjab and from Pakistan originally as visitors and, subsequently,

[Mr. Sydney Bidwell]

information is sent over which shows that they would be in great jeopardy if they returned to their land of origin? As the Minister knows, I have made representations from time to time on that score. May we assume that nothing being debated at the moment will impair the ability of an hon. Member to intervene in such cases? Such interventions have always been acceptable—at any rate interventions from me. I hope that nothing the right hon. and learned Gentleman says will lead to difficulties in that regard. May we have that assurance?

Mr. Waddington: Many people enter Britain as visitors and then make pleas to stay here because they are frightened to return to their own country. Of course hon. Members are at liberty to make representations in such cases. The procedure that I have explained about the facilities that are available overseas is the best way to provide for emergencies. A note to the amendment to the guidelines which has been circulated to all hon. Members and which has been placed in the Library makes this clear.

In practice, it is unusual for people to arrive here without visas because of an emergency. There is no justification for creating a loophole in the provisions of the Bill which would be more likely to benefit people determined to exploit any opportunity to evade our controls than people with urgent reasons to travel. I invite the Committee to reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Mr. Dubs: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 1, line 16, at end insert—

'(1A) No liability shall be incurred under sub-section (1) above in respect of any person who embarked on the ship or aircraft at a port or airport within the European Community.'.

This amendment was inspired by the General Council of British Shipping which wrote to many hon. Members explaining its concern about how the Bill will work in relation to cross-Channel ferries. The council makes a good case for saying that, as the Bill stands, the ferry operators would face serious difficulties in checking all passengers' passports or other documentation. In its letter, the council says:

"A reporting time of 45 minutes for cars is normal. To be required to examine passports and compare photographs with the physical appearance of perhaps 1,200 passengers, either in cars, coaches or trains, cannot be seen as anything other than an intolerable burden on an industry already facing intense competition."

In the same submission, the General Council of British Shipping explains the difficulties involved in devising a zone near the point of access to its ferries where passengers could be examined and from which they could be prevented from entering the ferries until their documents had been scrutinised.

There is a heavy volume of traffic in the European Community and, although ferry operators operate under greater difficulties in checking documents than the airlines, the problem also applies to airlines because of the number of passengers and because normally there is only a cursory passport examination by immigration officials for travel within the Community.

There are real difficulties in suggesting that the provisions of the Bill could easily be administered by the operators of the cross-Channel ferries. I do not know whether this point was raised on Second Reading. I certainly did not raise it. I do not know whether the Minister is sympathetic to that argument or whether he sees force in the case. Clearly, the Bill was not devised to hit operators within the Common Market because of mutual arrangements between the various European countries relating to immigration control of people coming from other countries.

I do not think that it is the Minister's intention to have this damaging impact on the ferry operators, but it seems to be the consequence of what is intended, because operators will be obliged to scrutinise documents which at the moment they are not required to do. There is a problem here and the amendment suggests one possible approach to it.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I begin by declaring an interest as consultant to Sea Containers, the owner of Sealink GB.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) on getting the wording of his amendment right for acceptance in the debate, which I failed to do, and I endorse many of his comments about ferry companies. I know that the Committee is anxious to make progress, so I shall not make a long speech.

It is worth putting on record that one of the difficulties faced by ferry companies, compared with airlines, is that about 70 per cent. of people coming here are British citizens, and a large majority of the rest are European nationals. The sheer volume also presents a difficulty because 2,000 or more people come here at any one time. I ask hon. Members to imagine the difficulties that that poses.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), the spokesman for the Liberal party on these matters, spoke earlier about some of those difficulties, and I do not want to repeat what he said. For the benefit of the Committee, I shall flesh out some of the costings that are suggested as likely in the light of this legislation. Sealink, one of the two major operators, estimates that for the Dover-Calais and Folkestone-Boulogne routes alone it would need 16 people to run the services in Calais and 14 in Boulogne at a cost of £480,000 per year. I stress that that is a minimum figure if the conditions are to be carried out in their entirety. It is estimated that at Harwich at least £150,000 will be needed, and by the time office and other expenses are paid the cost will be at least £500,000 per year.

6.30 pm

My right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will not be surprised to hear that the company concludes that it would be cheaper to ignore the legislation, with obvious potential difficulty for itself and for the Government. The 1971 Act already costs substantial sums—£79,000 in Dover last year, and a further £80,000 is in dispute—merely to repatriate illegal immigrants. A further problem in relation to ferries is, to put it delicately, the state of the passengers, who are more likely to be somewhat merry and boisterous and to have enjoyed themselves rather more on the trip than those arriving by air, not to mention the dreaded football supporters, whether on their outward or return journey. If those people are to be stopped and checked, as the legislation manifestly requires, problems of law and order can readily be imagined.

So far, the only suggestion from the ferry companies is that the only reasonable way to carry out the checks would be on board. That would avoid many of the problems, but

there is a central and obvious difficulty. If at that stage the documentation is shown to be false, the ferry company has no alternative but to keep the now illegal immigrant on board until the ship returns to France or Belgium. At that point, it is likely that the authorities in that country will also refuse to accept the illegal immigrant. Faced with the alternative of shipping the unfortunate individual back and forth indefinitely, the company might well conclude that the only way out would be to land the immigrant in this country and pay the fine.

I have deliberately curtailed my remarks, but I hope that I have highlighted the major problem for ferry operators. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister will bear this in mind when replying to the debate.

Mr. Bermingham: The Government cannot have fully considered the volume of summer trade across the English Channel and the Irish sea. A refugee may jump ship at Cork, for instance, and then make his way to Dun Laoghaire and board a ship for England to seek political asylum. How are the ferry operators in Ireland expected to deal with that problem? The Government have clearly not thought the matter through. I endorse all that the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) has said about the English channel, and it applies equally to the Irish sea. How will the problem be dealt with at Cherbourg, for example, with ferries scooting backwards and forwards across the Channel in the high season, not to mention Jersey and Guernsey which are easily reached on day trips from the continent?

In theory, the ferry companies will have to purchase extra land and buildings at continental ports and have officers there to search everyone. We are supposed to be part of a European Community free travel zone, but that will be the situation. We cannot check people when they come off the ferry because the company will already be liable. The checking must take place in Ireland, in France, in Germany, in Denmark, and so on. Ferries going to other parts of Scandinavia and thus outside the European Community will also have to provide extra facilities to check every passenger.

Most people seem to imagine that the Bill is designed to deal only with people coming from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and places like that. In theory, however, it is to deal with anyone seeking to enter the United Kingdom without a visa, whether from eastern Europe, the middle east, north Africa, west Africa or even south America, and whether they be refugees or illegal immigrants. That means that everyone must be checked. One cannot simply go on colour because a person from eastern Europe will be the same colour as we are.

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The amendment deals with the European Community.

Mr. Bermingham: Perhaps I may develop my argument, Sir Paul. A refugee does not have to come from within the Community. He could have entered a Community country from anywhere in the world. The carrier, however, is operating out of a European port. That is why I have broadened the intake, as it were, because too much of today's debate has dealt only with illegal immigration. The same was true on Second Reading. As the Minister well knows, I am concerned about refugees. A refugee from the middle east may enter the European Community elsewhere and then come to a Channel port.

The amendment seeks to bring a sense of reality to these matters so that shipping companies operating ferries from European countries, including the Republic of Ireland, do not face liability. I believe that the Government have misunderstood the needs of the shipping industry and have failed to appreciate the enormity of the burden being placed upon that highly competitive industry. If companies have to abide by the Bill, which I do not like, the cost will be enormous because of the volume of traffic across the English channel and the Irish sea, particularly in the summer season.

The Bill, as drafted, is an invitation to the shipping companies to conclude that they should ignore it because there is no way in which they could economically comply with it. Any Act that invites people to ignore it through sheer economic necessity must be a bad Act because the object of English law and legislation is to be obeyed. If the Minister does not like the terms of the amendment, they could be adapted, but if the Bill is not amended the shipping industry will be in an extremely difficult position.

Mr. Hanley: I oppose the amendment for a few simple reasons. First, it would be disastrous if the Bill enshrined what could be seen as a weak link by those who would choose to exploit the lives of the miserable. It would become clear that to enter the United Kingdom from Common Market countries was easier than to do so from anywhere else, and that would be very unfair on carriers coming from outside Europe.

Secondly, those who support the amendment do not understand that immigration controls within the European Community are very different from controls on the borders of the United Kingdom. The European Community deals with internal controls; we concentrate on border controls. In the absence of identity cards within the United Kingdom, I feel that we should resist the amendment.

Hon. Members have given the impression that shipping companies and aircraft operators never look at any document before a passenger boards an aeroplane or boat, but checking tickets is the most basic part of the process.

Mr. Bermingham *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman said that he would be brief, and he was not. I shall be brief, and I shall stick to what I have said.

Checking tickets, and the additional task of checking a passport for an obvious forgery, would not cause much of an extra burden.

I remind the Committee that the powers in the Bill are discretionary. It is important for it not to contain a clause that weakens it, or fetters the Government in any way.

We in the United Kingdom rely considerably on the checks already carried out by carriers; we are also obliged by many foreign countries to check tickets. It is perfectly reasonable for those involved in immigration at Dover or Heathrow, for instance, to play their part in our immigration policy.

Some countries do not institute border controls as we do — for instance, between East and West Berlin. I remind hon. Members of the poor people who have been ferried across the Soviet Union, through East Germany to West Berlin and through West Germany to France. If such people believed that they could come to the United Kingdom without facing checks, their misery would be increased when they found that that was not the case. They

[Mr. Hanley]

would try to reach the European Community and then enter the United Kingdom, often passing through many safe countries where they could have claimed asylum before eventually arriving here.

Mr. Madden: I, too, shall be brief. On 6 March, the Minister received a letter from Mr. Tim Whitfield, of Bradford metropolitan district community relations council, drawing his attention to requirements made by the French of visa nationals settled in the United Kingdom. It said:

"I have recently had sight of correspondence between an Indian citizen and the French Consulate in London . . . You will see from the letter that the French consulate require a 're-entry visa to the United Kingdom from the Home Office' . . . If, as I suspect, the letter means to refer to the visa exempt stamp, then this would seem to be a significant extension of the use of that stamp. Instead of it being used by the airlines, it is in fact being used by the immigration officers of other countries."

Will the Minister take the opportunity provided by the amendment to give an undertaking, that urgent representations are being made by the British Government to the French reminding them that such a requirement is unnecessary?

6.45 pm

The letter from the French Consulate says:

"Your passport should be endorsed (when necessary) with the visa for the country you will enter when leaving France, and, eventually, with the re-entry visa into the United Kingdom before the French visa can be issued: the validity of this re-entry visa into the United Kingdom must exceed by one month at least the validity of the French visa."

I should be grateful if, instead of attempting to obscure issues with bluster and abuse, the Minister would address himself to that problem.

Mr. Waddington: I do not know where the bluster and abuse come from, but I undertake to investigate the hon. Gentleman's point—although, as I think he will agree, it does not arise from the amendment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is right: the amendment would create a huge gap in the scheme. As the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) said, a very heavy volume of traffic comes from other parts of the European Community—30 per cent. of the traffic coming into Great Britain comes by sea—and I fear that, as a result of the amendment, people would try to enter the country via Europe rather than coming here direct.

Furthermore, it does not seem very sensible to take steps that encourage people to go to Europe first before coming here. That would add to the problems of our European partners, which already face considerable problems at their frontiers. The immigration practice and procedures of the Community countries have not yet been harmonised. If we could reach agreement on that in the near future, it would be open to the Home Secretary not to require payment from carriers carrying passengers from within the European Community. However, in the meantime, we, like other countries in the Community, such as West Germany, Belgium and Holland, must take the action that we consider necessary to protect our immigration control.

We recognise the concern of the shipping companies and we appreciate that the Bill will add to their burdens. However, we feel that the extent of those burdens has been overstated. I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) that the Bill is very tightly drawn. It relates only to those who require leave to enter this country. It does not apply to British citizens or to others who have the right of abode here, or to European Community nationals exercising their right of free movement under the treaty. It excludes the great majority of ferry passengers from the European continent. In fact, it excludes 80 per cent. of all passengers who arrive in this country having travelled here from Europe.

Surely it will not place an intolerable burden on a carrier to ask a person presenting his ticket to present a British or European Community passport. I thought that the concern of the ferry companies was based on the remaining 20 per cent. of cases, in which they would have to look at a foreign passport and, sometimes, see whether there was a visa inside that passport. I do not think that the ferry companies can complain about merely having to ask someone presenting his ticket to present his British passport.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that to find the 20 per cent. he will have to look at 100 per cent. because one cannot tell just by looking at someone whether he is French, German, Russian or Yugoslav? Every passport will have to be examined.

Mr. Waddington: I am saying that for 80 per cent. of travellers there will be no difficulty because everyone knows that a British citizen has the right of entry to the United Kingdom. Everybody knows that a person carrying a European Community passport has the right to come to the United Kingdom to work. There is no difficulty in respect of 80 per cent. of passengers who come here from Europe.

The difficulty arises only in relation to the remaining 20 per cent. of passengers. Passports, documents of identity and visas, if required, must be examined in only 20 per cent. of cases. We are not talking about other more complex forms of entry clearance such as entry certificates which depend upon establishing the reasons for a person's journey to the United Kingdom. Even in respect of the remaining 20 per cent. the carrier has to ensure only that the person has a passsport, that the passport contains a photograph, that it is valid and in date and not an obvious forgery. In the case of visa nationals, the carrier does not have to decide whether a person is entitled to settlement. The carrier must merely ensure that the visa which a visa national requires is in the passport. I mention that, not to deny that there will be an additional burden, but to ask hon. Members and the carriers to keep the issue in proportion.

We cannot expect carriers to stop clever forgeries or skilful impersonations. The Bill does not expect them to do that. There is no liability if the falsity is not reasonably apparent, as hon. Members will know from reading clause 1(4).

It is unpalatable news to some carriers, as was made clear by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft), that the test that we are incorporating in the Bill is the test which is already in the Immigration Act 1971. The words in the Bill are contained in schedule 2, paragraph 19(2), of that Act.

The Bill will be operated sensibly and reasonably, like the Immigration Act 1971, which already imposes burdens

on carriers. It imposes burdens on all carriers—ferry companies and airlines. The standard is not demanding. Carriers are not expected to have the type of skills expected of immigration officers. They are simply being encouraged to check that someone has what looks like a valid passport and, where necessary, a valid visa because otherwise a person's journey is a waste of time. That is not the same as acting as an immigration officer or doing his job for him.

Mr. Dubs: This would be simple if there were one type of British passport, but there are five or six different types of British passport. The Minister may know the difference between them but it will not be easy for someone employed by a ferry company standing at Calais to distinguish between a British citizen, a person with a new Hong Kong passport and others. The employee of the carrier will have to know which countries' citizens require visas and which do not. That is a lot of knowledge to carry in one's mind when checking quickly 1,000 or 2,000 passengers.

Mr. Waddington: There is no difficulty because none of the different forms of British nationality requires visas for entry. The passengers have only to present a British passport and that is the end of the problem.

The practical difficulties can be overcome. Ferry operators, like airline operators, will have to consider their arrangements at the ports. That is a matter for negotiation and agreement between them and the port authorities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch referred to a matter which arose out of a statement by one of the ferry companies. The company said that it had been led to understand that it might be placed in some difficulty in the Netherlands as a result of Dutch law. We understand that under Dutch law carriers are obliged before selling tickets to ensure that the passenger has valid documents for his journey. If, on checking whether a passenger still has the necessary documents before embarkation, the carrier finds that a passenger seeking to travel on its ferry is undocumented, Dutch law obliges Dutch immigration officials to accept the passenger back on to Dutch soil. We therefore doubt whether the fears about Dutch law expressed by Sealink are justified.

I emphasise that discretion will be used sensibly. It is open to my right hon. Friend not to ask for payment in respect of an infringement of the legislation. Naturally, he will consider carefully and sympathetically arguments that a charge should not be made in a particular case. If for good reason a carrier is legally obliged to take a passenger without documents, or if some unsuspected crisis arises, as occurred tragically at Zeebrugge a few weeks ago, the Home Secretary would consider not imposing the charge. That is the best way to deal with any intractable and unavoidable problems which may arise for ferry companies.

Mr. Dubs: Under the Bill I understand that it is permissible only to levy a charge of £1,000 or nothing, unless, by Order in Council, that sum is changed. The sum of £1,000 may be in proportion to an airline fare for a journey halfway across the world, but it is out of proportion as a penalty on a shipping company because it is a large multiple of a ferry charge. Will that not make the Minister's task difficult when deciding how to apply his discretion?

Mr. Waddington: The likelihood of many cases arising is small. Since 5 March we have had occasion to write to carriers in about 200 cases. Only 17 involved ferries. I might be wrong about that, but I shall write to the hon. Gentleman if I am. Experience does not suggest that this is other than a minor problem. We shall exercise discretion sensibly.

The immigration service will provide full guidance, co-operation and assistance. It has already had an extensive meeting with the General Council of British Shipping, including Sealink and Townsend Thoresen. That meeting was held on 20 March. Written guidance has been prepared along with a video and documentation about what to look for. The service is ready to accept invitations and to speak to the staff at points of embarkation. I saw Sealink representatives yesterday.

The Government will continue to join its Community partners in considering collectively what steps to take to protect immigration controls and to deal with signs of abuse. If there are any practical difficulties which require inter-governmental consultations, we shall consider them.

It is significant that the European Community working group on asylum abuse included in its report to be considered by Ministers references to carrier sanctions. The legal difficulties referred to by the General Council of British Shipping were not identified by that working group.

I hope that I have given some comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch and to the carrying companies. We shall do our best to help them. The House must balance the need for firm immigration control with the obligations and additional efforts that that may require of carrying companies.

The Bill limits the carrier's obligations; it provides safeguards and allows the Home Secretary to use his discretion not to impose a charge. I can assure the Committee that that discretion will be used sensibly.

We cannot responsibly recommend placing the burdens only on airlines, bearing in mind the high percentage of traffic which enters the country by sea—one-third of the traffic entering the United Kingdom. We cannot ignore the scope for abuse from these journeys, nor can we leave it all to our Community partners. The Bill is right to include shipping. With co-operation and a measure of determination from the shipping companies to match that already being shown by the airlines, any practical problems can be overcome.

Mr. Dubs: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

7 pm

Mr. Meadowcroft: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 1, line 21, at end insert—

'(3) No liability shall be incurred under subsection (1) above in respect of any person transported from a country in which there is no United Kingdom embassy or mission.'.

The amendment applies to a small problem, which would not be of great concern to the many refugees who come from countries where there is a United Kingdom embassy or commission. However, there are a few countries where there is no such embassy or commission. Given that the Government base their case for the Bill on the need to have the appropriate documents to travel by the various shipping lines and airlines and enter this country, it is important to note that in some cases those items are virtually impossible to secure.

[Mr. Meadowcroft]

Some of the countries with which we have no diplomatic relations are, by definition, places that are in turmoil—Libya and Syria, for instance. There are some countries in which we have no embassy or commission but where it is possible to obtain documents via a third country, such as Iran. Nevertheless, in some countries obtaining the necessary papers is very difficult.

The other category of country where there is no British representation is those that are so small or remote that they do not as yet merit the expense of a British diplomatic mission. Such countries include Chad, where there is currently conflict, and the Central African Republic, which has a chequered history. Going back a little further, in countries such as Angola there were difficulties and people may have wished to avail themselves of refugee status.

Previously, the Government's argument in some of those cases was that the people in question could travel to a third country and obtain the necessary documents to board shipping lines or airlines to come to this country. Taking that at face value, there are few countries where the people involved would have wished to come to Britain. In most cases they would have wished to travel to France or another European or Asian country. But if there were such people, it would be difficult for them to acquire documents if there were no way of doing it from a British representation in those countries.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman is saying, therefore, that there is hardly a country from which an individual may wish to come directly to the United Kingdom rather than going to another country first where he could claim asylum. Surely the hon. Gentleman is over-egging the matter because of the small numbers that he envisages. Would it not be better to remove this clause and merely allow the Secretary of State discretion, which is inherent in the Bill in any event?

Mr. Meadowcroft: One could argue the opposite and say that, if it is such a small matter, let us pass the amendment. However, if it is a question of discretion being applied, when it was applied with regard to the Tamils —which sparked off this matter—it turned out that it had not been applied in ways that many hon. Members would have wished.

Mr. Corbyn: We do not know yet.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The hon. Gentleman says that we do not know yet, but the indications are that some—a minority perhaps—will be given refugee status.

The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is right: this is not a major issue. However, in some respects the Government pray in aid other countries which have enacted the same laws. If that is true, how do we deal with the difficulty of getting out of a country unless there is a way of obtaining documents to go to another country from which they can come here? If only a few people are involved, it is precisely those for whom one should have consideration if there is conflict in Syria, Albania or Libya, because there may be people who wish to come here who, for whatever reason, will not go to a third country. Therefore, even if it is not a major point, it is worth noting that a problem may arise.

Mr. Waddington: The hon. Gentleman is right; this is not a major issue. It is a splendid example of how, during the debates on the Bill, all sorts of extraordinary hypothetical situations have been raised, none of which comes within a mile of what the right hon. Lady the Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) referred to earlier as the real world.

I shall bore the Committee with some interesting statistics which are rather fascinating. There are 31 countries in the world without United Kingdom representation. The nationals of 22 of those countries require visas to come to the United Kingdom. In 1985 there were only 22 applications for asylum from the citizens of all 31 countries. Some 20 of those applications were from citizens of Niger, for which there is no visa requirement. During the year there were no grants of refugee status to any of those 22 applicants.

I think that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) will agree that he does not seem to have put his finger on a major problem. However, hypothetically and potentially, the amendment creates yet another loophole. The protection that it purports to provide is unnecessary for bona fide travellers. The loophole is obvious—anyone who contrives to get to one of these small countries which does not have a United Kingdom post could travel on from there without the documents that are required by the Bill and no liability would arise under the legislation. He or she would not have to be a national of one of those small countries. Clearly, the amendment would cover anyone who left his own country on a journey with stop-overs and used those stop-overs to come on here. That would greatly extend the scope for abuse.

The amendment would help any visa national whose own country did not have a British embassy or mission to avoid the visa requirement. That cannot possibly be right when one cannot identify even the beginnings of a problem. In practice, few if any of these countries have direct flights to the United Kingdom, so visas can easily be obtained when the passenger stops off en route. The inconvenience that is caused is more than justified by the case for requiring visas from nationals of those countries. Since they need visas to come here, it is entirely reasonable to expect them to show that they have such visas before the carrier brings them to this country. If they have left one of those obscure countries, if I may rudely so call them, and gone to another country because of the conditions there, this country, by definition, would not be their first country of refuge.

I find it very difficult to identify any problem. In those circumstances, I cannot recommend the amendment to the Committee.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I retire discomfited. The Minister does not hesitate to read out his full brief. I do not think he gives us a chance on these occasions. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Order for Third Reading, read.

7.9 pm

Mr. Waddington: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill is short but it is well constructed, timely and necessary. I shall be as brief as the Bill. I do not believe

that anybody listening to our proceedings this afternoon would have come to the conclusion that there were any great loopholes in the Bill or pitfalls into which genuine refugees would fall. In fact, all the discussion this afternoon has gone to prove what a sensible Bill it is, dealing with a practical problem.

We really would have been failing in our duty as a Government if, having identified a yawning gap in the control, we had not set out to fill that gap. We have done that, and I invite the House to give a resounding—if that is the right expression—Third Reading to the Bill.

7.10 pm

Mr. Corbyn: The Bill is squalid, introduced in haste, racist and inhumane in operation. It is a disgrace to the House that it has been introduced and it will go down in history as one of the more disgraceful acts of the Home Secretary's reign over immigration and refugee law. The Government have sought to use people applying to come to Britain as genuine asylum seekers to hype up racist hysteria in the Murdoch press and others and have introduced a Bill that turns its back on the victims of oppression in other parts of the world.

Opposition Members have opposed the Bill because it does not hang together in any sense. The core of the Bill relies on there not being any independent system of appeal against arbitrary decision by immigration officers or Ministers. When the Government were challenged on the right of appeal at the time of the Vietnamese refugee case, their defence was that cases could go to UKIAS or to Members of Parliament or to judicial review.

The Minister has made it clear that the Bill means that Members of Parliament will have no right to intervene and UKIAS will have no automatic right to intervene. People will not even be able to stay in Britain while a judicial review is pending. Instead, they will be thrown out.

Britain is turning its back on the refugee problems of many parts of the world, some of which are our creation or stem from colonial times. A slightly more responsible attitude towards refugees is required than the Government have shown. They should listen more carefully to what the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has said about the Bill.

The Home Secretary announced the introduction of the Bill because of the mess that the Government had got themselves into over the Tamil asylum seekers. But the implications will go far and wide and reach anyone seeking political asylum from any part of the world unless they can come here with well forged or agreed documentation.

The Minister knows full well that the history of people seeking political asylum from oppressive regimes means that they must resort to all sorts of methods to flee that oppression. If it is good enough for the Prime Minister to welcome asylum seekers from the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, why has she introduced the Bill, if not for the very reason that the Home Secretary announced—that he wishes to have no part in the problems of the Third world as seen by the Government?

This is a rather unpleasant step towards greater European racism and xenophobia, and I look forward to the day when an independent appeals system can be introduced in Britain so that asylum seekers may have their cases properly heard and not decided in the discreditable way that the Minister proposes in the Bill.

7.14 pm

Mr. Bidwell: This is a sad Bill. It means that it will be much harder for genuine refugees to make their way to Britain. However, I must also confess that I doubt whether we shall hear of many cases of carriers being fined £1,000 after being taken to court and perhaps having appealed. In some instances, one would be trying to fine foreign states because many foreign states run airlines. I doubt whether, when we ask how many such cases have arisen, there will be many. The general tone is that it will be harder for genuine refugees to make their way to these shores, and that is a crying shame.

7.15 pm

Mr. Dubs: There are two key issues. The first is that as recently as the autumn of 1985 the Government said in their White Paper that there were three safeguards for people seeking asylum status. All those three safeguards have now been torn up and the Government have turned their back on the commitment that they made as recently as the autumn of 1985.

Secondly, as I think the House will agree, the key issue in dealing with asylum seekers is deciding who has a genuine claim. That is always a difficult problem and nobody has denied it. Nobody in the course of all these discussions has ever said that we should forget that that problem exists and simply concentrate on other matters.

The Minister has decided to remove the problem from these shores elsewhere. I am sorry that he has decided to do that. It is perfectly clear to the Minister—he will not deny it—that there will be asylum seekers; there will be people in fear of persecution who will not be able to reach these shores and who will be in danger of their lives. They may not be many and they may find other countries that are more accommodating, but the fact is that that will be one consequence of this legislation.

I regret that that has had to be the case. I regret that we could not continue with our normal tradition of tolerance and welcome for all asylum seekers who seek refuge here. That tradition is many centuries old, and tonight the Government have closed the door on it.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 147, Noes 57.

Division No. 128] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Gow, Ian
Body, Sir Richard	Greenway, Harry
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Ground, Patrick
Bright, Graham	Grylls, Michael
Brinton, Tim	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Bruinvels, Peter	Hanley, Jeremy
Buck, Sir Antony	Hargreaves, Kenneth
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Harris, David
Colvin, Michael	Harvey, Robert
Coombs, Simon	Haselhurst, Alan
Cope, John	Hayes, J.
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Dicks, Terry	Hayward, Robert
Durant, Tony	Heathcoat-Amory, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas	Heddle, John
Fallon, Michael	Hill, James
Forth, Eric	Hirst, Michael
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman	Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Franks, Cecil	Holt, Richard
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*	Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Freeman, Roger	Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Gale, Roger	Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Galley, Roy	Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*

Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Michael Portillo and
Mr Richard Ryder.

NOES

Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Buchan, Norman
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Corbett, Robin
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dubs, Alfred
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Nellist, David
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Matthew
Wainwright, R.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Sydney Bidwell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Broadcasting Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

Amendment of 1981 Act

7.27 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, leave out lines 19 to 23.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 4 and 5.

Mr. Mellor: The Committee considered this matter at some length and, falling for the blandishments of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), accepted an amendment that there should be a substantial increase in independent production on the BBC and independent television system and that that should be put on a statutory basis.

I wish to make it clear to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East that the Government share that ambition, and it may well be that the use of the word "substantial" underplays what we have in mind. The hon. Gentleman is aware that we have suggested to the BBC and the IBA that we are looking for independent access to the ITV and BBC systems of about 25 per cent. over a four-year period. Of course if one were to get technical about the word "substantial", the increase may not be anything like that amount. The hon. Gentleman said that the word "substantial" was used in the creation of Channel 4 and that that led to independent producer access to that system of about 45 per cent. I welcomed that and it stimulated my interest, and, indeed, the hon. Gentleman's interest, in taking the matter a stage further tonight.

Our position is clear. We are negotiating with the industry and with other interested parties, including the Independent Television Contractors Association and the Independent Producers' Association. We are prepared also to see others with an interest to advance. Next week, for example, I shall be meeting a delegation that will be led by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). We shall make ourselves available so that we can hear the views of all interested parties. In so doing we shall press what I believe to be the legitimate role of the Government — to stimulate the expansion of the independent sector. I believe that it has many advantages and I do not need to go into them tonight.

The only issue that divides us is whether legislation is necessary. We have said to the IBA and the BBC that it would be in everyone's interest if these matters could proceed consensually. We have also made it clear that we would not hesitate to legislate if we were to conclude in future that matters had not proceeded in accordance with what we believe to be the legitimate aspirations of the independent production sector, which involves a significant share of the programming of both systems.

It would appear to be an act of bad faith by the Government if we were to accept the amendment, which we fought valiantly in Committee. It would not advance the case for a number of reasons because the Bill applies only to the ITV system whereas the argument extends to the BBC and so forth.

I do not want to knock what the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East did because I believe that he sent out a clear call to those who are involved in the discussions. Other parties, apart from the Government, are keen to see the independent production sector enhanced and given a proper and appropriate share of the programming on the major channels. I gather that one or two of those who supported the hon. Gentleman in Committee may have repented. We may hear some interesting observations from the hon. Member from Islington, South and Finsbury, who will no doubt cover his tracks with his customary eloquence, which, as always, would be better utilised in a better and more honourable cause. We shall listen to him with our customary patience.

The cause of the independent producers is well known, and we have made it clear that it is important that progress be made. The amendment did nothing to damage that prospect when it was made in Committee, but I feel that it would not be appropriate for it to remain in the Bill. I welcome the valuable point that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East has made, but I ask him to agree with me that it would be better if matters were to proceed in the way that I have outlined. I hope that he will not be too greatly offended when I advise the House to remove the amendment that he so cleverly managed to insert in Committee.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Minister has drawn his usual crowd into the Chamber! One of these days he will attract a decent audience.

It is slightly odd that the Government, who so quickly embraced the Peacock committee's report, which called for 40 per cent. access to independent producers, should now oppose the change which was made to the Bill in Committee. It was a move to ensure that a substantial proportion of programmes would be provided by independent producers.

The Minister has referred to the various talks that are going on in and around the industry. I hope that he will not find it too offensive when I say that the Government want to help independent producers but short of doing anything. I accept that the change which was made would apply only to ITV contractors, but that was meant to be a start. The House will understand that the Bill was dealing with only that sector of the industry. Things have moved on apace in the real world meanwhile. The Minister will know, and the House will be interested to know, that the BBC, without any legislation behind it, is proposing substantially to increase the number of programme hours to be filled by independent productions from the present rather derisory 75 hours a year.

The Minister also knows that the IBA has made proposals to increase independent access to about 500 hours of ITV air time within two years. The purpose of the amendment—in this I think it was successful—was to place a marker to signal that the proposition that independent producers should have more access on both channels had all-party support in the House. That is important.

That said, the proposals of the BBC and the IBA will lead to a significant amount of production by independents, which will lead inevitably to the loss of staff jobs and the closure of production facilities. That is almost certain, and the BBC is considering the closure of one studio facility. We are concerned that we do not let go of the important anchor of public service broadcasting that

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

the BBC provides. Undoubtedly we shall see swift, significant and important changes in the television industry. More independent productions imply increased production costs for the ITV companies and the BBC unless programme-making capacity is trimmed. Significant overhead and administrative costs will have to be spread over fewer productions.

The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians estimates that its extra costs of commissioning from independents could be between £30 million and £60 million. For example, that could adversely affect the profits of ITV, which were £107 million in 1985. Change there will be, but what matters is the management of the change. Unlike the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), Labour Members want no Wapping-style solution of the sort that he advocated. The process of change must be handled properly in full consultation and partnership with those presently employed within the industry.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House to which amendment he is speaking?

Mr. Corbett: I am trying to speak to the amendment that was called. I am in no doubt that I would be stopped by the Chair if I were not doing so.

The right hon. Member for Devonport has advocated that there should be some Wapping-style sort out of the television industry. That proposition should be rejected. Change there must be, but it must be handled properly in full consultation and partnership. Those who are now employed in the industry will not be unaware of a Murdoch-style operation that is a cover-up for a lowering of conditions of work and pay. If management decides to behave in an un-Wapping-like manner, there will be no need for that. The evidence that can be derived from the development of Channel 4 is that that has happened.

Broadcasting unions are not latter-day Luddites. They have shown, for example, with Channel 4 that they welcome development and will co-operate with change when they are consulted properly. They rightly insist on being consulted, listened to and responded to.

We need to know what we mean by independent producers. Who are they? Can they be companies owned, or partially owned, by existing television franchise holders who work for whoever they can get business from, and not solely for the company or companies, or must there be no financial connection between the independent producer and the franchise holder? I do not pretend to know the answers to these questions. These issues need to be explored.

We also need to know whether the access for independents will be based on a percentage of the programme hours or whether it will be related to the budgets that are available to stations for programme making regardless of the strength of the station. Will the same percentage of cash or hours of programming apply in exactly the same way to Thames as to Border, Grampian and Ulster? There is a strong case for a company by company approach because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has pointed out, it is vital that we do what we can to ensure that we preserve the regional character of the television network. That flavour cannot be sprinkled on like pepper and salt when the programme is made; it must be an integral part of it.

In all these changes, as in so much of our national life, there is a high risk that the independents in London and the south-east will get most of the work. There is no earthly reason why they should. We should put a marker down on that and take special care that the independent production companies in the regions are encouraged and enabled to compete for the regional access to ITV stations and the BBC. I hope that that matter will be taken on board. I suspect that it is not a contentious issue.

Recently, we watched an award ceremony at a London hotel in which people paid tribute to the ever-growing links between television feature film companies and the film industry. One person who was there to collect an award went out of his way to say that there had been a yawning gap between those two sectors but he was happy to note that it had narrowed. That is an important development. I hope that, as part of the process, the ITV companies will consider allocating cash to assist the United Kingdom film production industry because of the increasingly strong link between television and film productions. They can do so by making contributions through the British Screen Finance Corporation, which is a genuine independent sector through which a number of successful feature films have been produced for both television and cinema screening.

The British film industry is in no great shakes following the removal of all Government support, but the links with television hold some promise of better times. It is right that the ITV companies should encourage that process, for the benefit of television and cinema.

There is no real need to remove the amendment that was made in Committee, but I do not want to make heavy weather of that. We should be concerned about the change in the television industry and ensure that the change is sensitively and properly managed by the total involvement of those who work in the industry and their trade unions.

In all these changes, the best protection for the continuance of high quality programming remains the public service broadcasting sector in both the ITV companies and the BBC. That is what contributes so critically to the generally high standard of much of our television, and we must do nothing to put that at risk.

7.45 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): As is traditional in these debates, I must first declare an interest, in that I have a close association with the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians—the film technicians' trade union, which numbers Members on both sides of the House.

I was minded in Committee to support the amendment that was moved by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), because the principle of an increasing and developing role for independents within our television programming is important, and I support it. However, on reflection, I believe that the amendment, which the Government are now rightly seeking to remove from the Bill, is not the best way of achieving the end that I suspect we all have in mind.

The developing role for independents must be managed properly. Merely inserting a provision in the Bill which contains the vague concept of "a substantial proportion" is not necessarily a sensible way of doing that. I have my

misgivings about the Minister's earlier statement that "substantial" probably underplays what the Government have in mind. I fear for the future if that is the case, and I suspect that during the coming months we shall have many discussions about what exactly the Government have in mind.

A number of principles must be preserved when the increased role for independents comes about. First, the good facilities and expertise that have been built up, especially within the regional ITV network, must be preserved. Those facilities are a valuable place for the production of good programming for our television service.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): The hon. Gentleman has—rightly—referred to keeping facilities throughout the country in their superb state. Would he bar the idea that an independent could rent and use those studios and facilities to make an independent programme? Would his definition of an independent exclude that?

Mr. Smith: That possibility should be explored, subject to the second criterion that I was about to advance—the protection of employment. Many people employed in the networks fear that a forced pace towards access for independents will put their employment opportunities at risk. Natural wastage in most ITV companies is about 4 per cent. a year. If, within the limits of existing programming time, an immediate, accelerated impetus towards independent production is given, the 4 per cent. natural wastage rate will not be enough to reach, say, 25 per cent. in four years. That would clearly mean a reduction in employment opportunities for those in the industry. I am sure that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, who is trying to intervene, will say that, with increased possibilities for the independent sector, many of those employed in the network companies now will surely be able, and will want, to go into independent production, so there will be no loss of employment; rather, prospects will be in some way enhanced. However, I may be wrong, and he may have a different point to make.

Mr. Froud: The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East was going to say that, as many more hours of broadcasting will be available, there need be no diminution in the output of television companies to allow independent producers a substantial share of the action.

Mr. Smith: Of course, if it can be guaranteed that programming time will be expanded and that we are discussing an allocation of that expansion—that is, if access for independents will not eat into existing programming time—it would be fruitful and sensible to discuss that. But there must, in my view, be an ability to protect the interests of those who are already employed within the industry.

The third criterion which I have suggested in one of the amendments that I have tabled is the regional character of the network. At the moment most independent production comes from London and the south-east. It is very important, if there is to be an expanding role for independents, that there should be encouragement of independent production in the rest of the country as well as in London and the south-east. There is a danger that if we simply rush for independent access come what may we shall end up with a London-dominated network, and that would be a bad thing.

The fourth criterion is the crucial, overwhelming importance of quality. One of the glories of British television at the moment is that we rejoice in a high-quality product. I hope that if we are expanding independent access we shall make sure that we protect the quality of the programmes that are available to the British public.

Some considerable progress is already being made by both the IBA and the BBC in increasing access by independents. I understand that only a few days ago the IBA and the Minister agreed on a fairly substantial increase in independent programming access. So, clearly, movement is being made and the key point is that there must be discussions between the trade unions involved, the network companies, the Government and the independent sector to see how best we can proceed by agreement between all the parties whose interests are quite legitimately involved in the process, rather than take a legislative blunderbuss to force through something which some of those parties would not necessarily wish to see happen at quite that pace or in quite that way.

There is a point made in the issue of *Broadcast* magazine for 27 March—this week's issue—about the crucial need to involve the trade unions within the industry, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians and the Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance in particular, in any discussions about the way in which independent access is encouraged and assisted.

It seems to me that there is a wealth of other ideas that need to be explored as well. We should not simply be focusing on the issue of independent access to a specified number of programming hours. We should, for example, be considering the possibility of insisting that ITV companies, as part of their franchise, contract to pay a regular amount each year into a special fund set up to encourage the independent production of feature films. Perhaps it could be organised through the British Screen Finance Corporation. That is something that I believe should be explored, that would provide a major boost to the feature film production industry in this country and that would be easy for network companies to involve themselves in.

Those are the sort of ideas which I believe need to be explored and the sort of considerations which I believe need to be taken into account in pushing forward the future development of the independent sector. I understand from the amendment that the Government have moved that they are seeking to delete the part of the Bill that was added at Committee stage by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East. I support the Government in their aim. However, if by any remote chance the Government were to fail in their endeavour to encourage the House to accept their amendment, I would wish to press the amendments standing in my name. If, of course, the Government succeed, my amendments will automatically fall.

I support the Government in their intention tonight. I support the principle of independent access, but I must insist that this is dealt with in the right way, by consultation and by agreement between all the interested parties. That is the way forward that we have always had in the television industry in Britain and it is a way forward that has produced extremely good television programming to date. I do not want to lose that in the unseemly rush that I fear might ensue if the present wording of the Bill were retained.

Mr. Brinton: Before I forget, I must proudly tell the House that I have no financial interests that are relevant tonight. I have, of course, a long-lasting interest, having worked for all the broadcasting organisations, I think, in this country and hoping ultimately to do so again. Tonight, however, I am not swayed by brass or cash in any sense.

While listening to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) I was reflecting that perhaps the BBC was not quite so whole-heartedly a party to a wonderful consensus in the past when ITV was born. I seem to remember the BBC resisting it quite strongly. I do not think that all our broadcasting innovations have come out of a pleasant, cosy consensus in which the unions, the employers and everyone else have totally agreed. There must have been some forced pace at some time. I suspect that tonight, however, not many of us are far apart on this amendment.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, made a powerful speech in support of the Government's wish to withdraw. In a sense, the hon. Gentleman voiced many of the doubts that I voiced during Committee stage. To bring legislative details within this very simple Bill which seeks to extend the contracts is wrong, because the reason for extending the contracts is to have a wide-ranging philosophical discussion on the changes that we want to make.

I supported during Committee stage the amendment of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) about the substantial proportion of independent productions because it was urgent that this was put down firmly. If we had not done so a lot of those independents might have flown the nest when the time inevitably came when the BBC and ITV as we know them today—and they may have changed somewhat in a few years' time—needed the independents, and need them they will. So I added my name with some pleasure to the marker put down by the hon. Gentleman, and it was a very significant marker.

I am sure that hon. Members who are interested in these matters have been testing the water outside during the past week or two, as I have, and have found it very interesting. I talked to the executives of one ITV company only last night and they are most enthusiastic and want very much to encourage the independents. It is not one of the biggest companies, and of course there is another one of about the same size, not too far from the constituency of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, which takes a most disapproving view.

At the same time, throughout the history of television there has in a sense been an independent injection. So one comes back to the hon. Member for Erdington's question: what is an independent programme? This is so significant that one has to involve all parties—I include, of course, the trade unions; I am a humble member of the ACTT and Equity, not their representative—in deciding what is an independent production. Is it one that uses the facilities of the ITV franchise house or the BBC White City, or does it have to be barred those? Does it qualify as an independent production if it is a production such as the one I performed in in the 1970s for Anglia Television? That was made by a film company which is separate from Anglia, but Anglia, I believe, has a healthy interest in the financial side of that company. The producer and the director came from outside, as did the actors, such as myself, but the facilities and the technicians were Anglia's. In a sense that could be described as an independent programme. I do not think that in our discussions on this Bill we have got near to defining exactly what an independent programme is.

We have said to industry, "We believe that the way forward is for you to look more widely than perhaps you have had to in the past." I support that view, not just because I want to encourage the independent producers who feel that they are outside the wall and want to get in. I particularly want a greater variety of programming, more talent and, above all, more quality, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said, to be available on our main network screens.

8 pm

The Channel 4 exercise has shown that the independents have their place, but they need a place that is slightly higher than, at best, 12 per cent. of the audience. Many of those true independents can produce programmes to go on at peak time. I hope that that marker has been noticed because I suspect that it applies as much to the BBC as to ITV. Having said that, I shall humbly accede to the request by my hon. Friend the Minister not to resist too much his desire to pull out these lines in the Bill.

Mr. Freud: It is becoming pretty lonely on this Bench. The argument is in favour of the amendment, which was passed in Committee democratically and sufficiently substantially to matter, was supported by all Opposition Members and by two Conservative Members. Alas, they seem to have changed their minds, or possibly been nobbled or got at.

I was going to begin by welcoming the three amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), the late-lamented Front-Bench Labour spokesman on the arts. His first amendment was to leave out "substantial" and insert "appropriate". That was astonishing——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has lost me. He is referring to amendments which I do not see on the Amendment Paper.

Mr. Freud: I shall try to find you again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mentioned that three amendments were tabled. They were withdrawn. Those are the three amendments about which I am speaking briefly. The first amendment was to leave out "substantial" and insert——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members may not discuss amendments that have not been tabled or selected. They should stick to what is on the Amendment Paper.

Mr. Freud: They were tabled and not moved. A brief reference to history is surely acceptable in a short debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but perhaps I have said enough.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South said that he had certain views about the amendment which was carried in Committee and which the Government are trying to annul. I referred briefly to the fact that he now favours leaving out what in Committe he voted to put in and to the fact that the union has reared its head.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who also voted in Committee for the amendment which the Government now seek to delete, has told us that, on reflection, he has decided to vote against it. I am sorry about that. I am sorry also that he feels that

it is acceptable—I am sure that the Minister agrees that there will be more programming on ITV — that independent producers be restricted only to those currently off-peak hours and he would not mind, and might even support, a substantial amount of that programming being given to the independents.

I am totally in favour of not rushing anything. The amendment which was so popular a few weeks ago and which seems so unpopular now was tabled in those words, because we did not want a specific quota, which could have harmed the overall quality. Had we said to an ITV company, "You will use a certain percentage of hours of programming emanating from this or that source", it would have been impossible to retain quality. I did not do that.

I have been a Member for many years and I have heard from Ministers the same argument: "We really are in favour of what you say. We could not have said it better ourselves. We promise to abide by it. We really very much agree with it. But, if it is all the same to everyone, we would rather not have it enshrined in legislation." Here we go again. In the beginning, it was intended that 25 per cent. of the programming would be given to independent producers. We agree that 25 per cent. was a good target, but it was difficult, possibly dangerous, to quantify exactly. We therefore decided that the word in the Broadcasting Act 1980 creating Channel 4 would be "appropriate". I use the word as the hon. Member for Paisley, South did in the late-lamented amendment. As I have been deserted by so many Opposition Members, if the Government feel moved to press their amendment, I may not vote against it—I may not have anyone to assist me in the Division Lobby.

Mr. Brinton: Until we have defined what is an independent production, how can we possibly go along with the measure?

Mr. Freud: I am grateful for that intervention. The hon. Gentleman has obviously read the Peacock report, which stipulated what it meant by an independent producer. I was happy to abide by the Peacock definition. I am surprised that hon. Members now feel that they need more.

I was impressed by the letter that the Minister of State sent to Lord Thomson of Monifieth, in which he expressed the Government's view. He said:

"we remain, of course, fully committed to a substantial shift towards independent productions on both BBC"—

which has nothing to do with the Bill—

"and ITV".

I do not understand why, if one is

"fully committed to a substantial shift towards independent productions,"

one should resist an amendment that suggests that there shall be a substantial amount of independent production.

Mr. Meller: The hon. Gentleman is a man of considerable intellectual sophistication. I therefore refuse to believe that the scrupulous arguments advanced in justification of the Government's position have really eluded him. It is a simple proposition: if we can obtain what we want, which is a significant share of programming on both major systems for independent producers by consent, why go to the trouble of legislating, with all the difficulties of putting complicated definitions into statute? I have not bothered to give the hon. Gentleman all the drafting points on his amendment, but I fear that there were many. We have, as was made clear this week in well-informed press reports, already had a substantial offer from the IBA, and the BBC has brought forward other proposals which we need to pursue with it. So why rush into legislation?

Mr. Freud: I have just said to the Minister that I might not oppose the Government amendment. I am not rushing towards legislation. I am also having considerable trouble with my braces. It is my left brace.

It would not be right to rush into legislation—ever—and in this instance companies like Border TV—that many of us consider almost to be independent producers—might be harmed or quite gravely hurt by an overall quota imposition for a substantial amount of independent production. I felt—and I may be wrong—that my amendment, which the Government are now trying to remove, was worded to avoid problems with quotas or targets.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) mentioned the definition of "independent producer". Let me provide this: an independent producer is a production company registered in the United Kingdom which is not a holder of an ITV franchise, or a subsidiary of such a holder, nor is owned wholly or largely by the BBC or IBA or any international franchise holder or foreign franchise holder. In a nutshell, that is what we are talking about.

Broad guidelines laid down by legislation are needed to encourage the ITV companies to concede enough to independent producers. Provided the Minister will give that assurance—and I think he has done well and encouraged the independent producers by his words—then there is, and there has been, no great difference between us.

I am enthused by the comments of Mr. Jim Moir, the head of BBC light entertainment. He was quoted in *The Independent* as saying that he welcomed the pressure to use independent producers because he believed that they are a centre of excellence. He said:

"We are a teaching process. We hope our own staff will become independents. We will give them every patronage."

That is very much what my amendment—passed in Committee, and shortly to be overturned—is about.

I am sorry that I should be left as the sole advocate of enshrining into legislation what we all feel to be desirable, but provided that we are agreed that it deserves our support and enthusiasm—remembering the wise words of the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury and for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) that we must prise independent productions from the south-east and the big studios and companies and take them into the regions—I shall be content to allow the Government their amendment without opposing it.

8.15 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): I am not anxious to detain the House but I felt I had to retain my consistency from the Committee stage. Unlike some of the preceding speakers, I did support the Government on the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and I continue that support. It would appear from the preceding speeches by hon. Members on both sides of the House that the further thought that they have given to the matter has resulted in wiser counsel prevailing over the heady atmosphere of the Committee stage.

[Mr. John Powley]

There is nothing dishonourable in having further thoughts on a matter and concluding that a change of status is a wise move. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) and Labour Members on shifting their position with dignity and honour. I was concerned by the amendment that was produced.

There is in my constituency of Norwich, South the headquarters of one of the more substantial regional companies. Anglia Television can hold its head high on account of the content and the regional atmosphere of its programmes. It is much admired, not only by people in my constituency but in the whole of East Anglia, including the constituency of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East. I would be concerned if either the word "substantial" or a quota figure of 25 per cent. were imposed. I am convinced that it is better to have a voluntary understanding or agreement for independent producers.

I was informed that arrangements for access for the independent producers are currently being discussed by the ITCA, IBA and the independent producers themselves. I understand that the initial outcome during the period of the voluntary action up to 31 December 1989 will be the controlled opening-up of the ITV schedule as independent producers take advantage of the range of opportunities. I support that and past action by independent producers. I would worry if the word "substantial" or a figure of 25 per cent. were introduced. If that was adhered to and an imposition made requiring 25 per cent. or some other interpretation of "a substantial proportion" included in the programme content, it could possibly lead to a lowering of the standards of production. I would be concerned if there was a forced change of the programme content or quota of an independent producer. Change needs to evolve. That produces better quality and a better relationship. Those were the concerns that I had in Committee. I am pleased that those who had concerns in Committee have reconsidered and will be supporting the Government.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I had not intended to take part in discussion on the amendment because we have to reserve most of our time for weighty pronouncements during Third Reading. I am compelled to take part now because of the reference to the withdrawal of my own amendment. For greater accuracy I looked up what I had to say. The only time I spoke, I think, was on this amendment. That was unusual, because I spoke frequently during the rest of the Committee——

Mr. Freud: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why is it out of order for me to mention the hon. Member's withdrawn amendment while he is allowed to talk about it?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North East, (Mr. Freud) was talking about amendments which were not on the Amendment Paper. I am most concerned to hear how the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) relates his remarks to the Amendment Paper.

Mr. Buchan: I will tread with immense care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I said, in reference to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell),

> "I completely accept the dangers that my hon. Friend describes. The danger is there because the companies now have the ideological framework in which to operate. The Peacock report will be used by elements who are not on the side of the hon. Members who support the Bill and those who have spoken today."

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) and I were anxious that we should open no door which could be used by those who care little about the value of good independent production but who care greatly to smash up the whole of public service broadcasting.

Therefore, I said:

> "While I approve of the amendment we must ensure that in future safeguards are written into the conditions — including employment conditions — for continuation of production." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 3 March 1987; c. 94.]

By the future, I meant the present Report stage. For that reason, as I said, I tabled an amendment, but it is not before us, so I cannot refer to it in detail. If it had been, it would have stressed the importance of involving the trade unions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury approached the same problem in a different way. We were concerned about the word "substantial", especially when left in the hands of the Government. If I understood correctly what the Minister said, perhaps the word "substantial" was an understatement. So we were right to be anxious and to table amendments. My hon. Friend tabled an amendment that approached my problem in a different way. I thought that the solution was to make sure that nothing happened without the agreement of the trade unions. I forgot that the trade unions are perfectly capable of making sure that nothing happens; they can use their own wisdom to deal with the matter.

My hon. Friend set out what we would regard as necessary in the nature of production in the independent sector, that is, quality, and agreement by the parties to the contract,

> "having due regard to the quality of programmes to be produced and to the preservation of the regional character of the television network."

That at least goes some way towards establishing some care. My original amendment attempted to do that in another way.

It is unlikely, but if the Government amendment were defeated, we would support amendment No. 5 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury.

There are other reasons why I thought I should comment on the amendment. The conditions that I described have not been spelt out with much care by the Minister. He did not tell us how much care the Government intend to apply to the contracts. We were not helped by the comments—I regret that he is not here—of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), who had some trouble with his braces. He had particular trouble with his left brace, which seems to be an appropriate metaphor for the alliance — it has a left brace and a right brace, and the left is in trouble.

I do not trust the Government. I prefer it when they are withdrawing rather than introducing legislation. I see that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East has now returned. I am sorry that I referred to his braces in his absence. That was indiscreet.

Mr. Freud: The hon. Gentleman was not speaking in my absence—I was listening carefully. But lest he makes

any great issue of it, the reason was that my trousers were falling down—everything to do with the inefficacy of the braces; nothing to do with the alliance.

Mr. Buchan: No, but it extends the metaphor to cover the alliance even more thoroughly.

I was saying that I prefer to support the Government when they are withdrawing rather than introducing legislation, which is when we must watch them. At least the withdrawal of the amendment that was passed is keeping the status quo instead of plunging further into change. On that basis, we shall listen with care to the Minister's reply and act accordingly.

Amendment agreed to.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

8.25 pm

Mr. Buchan: We are entitled to say a word or two on Third Reading. There are deep issues behind the Bill. It is one thing when important issues are discussed in Committee, but, as everyone knows, Committee stages are rarely reported in the media and these matters should not be kept hidden. There are things happening in the television and media world, and the Government are responsible for some of them, which should be made known. Problems are facing us. We are dealing with a challenge of values, as I said continually in Committee, and no part of the media took that up, so we have to make some of the same comments again in the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman has been a Member of the House for a long time. He knows that on Third Reading we discuss what is in the Bill. I hope very much that he will confine his remarks to the contents of the Bill.

Mr. Buchan: Absolutely. I was thinking that we must concentrate on what is in the Bill, which is concerned with contracts for those who will enter or remain in the independent sector, the commercial sector, of broadcasting. We have some guidance as to the Government's thinking on what they will do with such contracts during the three-year extension. We are anxious about what the Government have in mind. That is in line with what the Bill is concerned about. We are talking not only about time. We can say that the time equals three times 12 months. We are concerned with the contracts that will be established after that time.

There are two things showing us what the Government's intentions are. One is the Peacock report. The Government, far from rejecting the report, are now beginning to accept the concept in it—that one should move towards a free market. They cite the example in the Peacock report of what has happened to the press since 1694. When they look at a contract, they will have to take into consideration what has happened to the press since 1694. It has devolved into the hands of three monopolies. The popular press is controlled by three basic——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must bear in mind my earlier advice to him. I draw to his attention the fact that the Bill alters

"the maximum period for which programmes may be provided under contracts with the Independent Broadcasting Authority."

I hope that we shall confine our remarks to that.

Mr. Buchan: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to suggest that, because we have a three-year extension, it gives us some time in which we can examine the nature of the contracts——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: But not on this occasion.

Mr. Buchan: I absolutely agree, as always. I was outlining the things which, during the three years, people might have to consider. They will have to consider recommendations such as those in the Peacock report, which argues for a free market and the removal of regulation and control, with a world of undiluted pap, and people coining in the money on the way. The satellites will whirl and buzz round the globe while people are on their way to the bank.

Apparently that is on the basis of freedom—freedom for the entrepreneur. However, in fact, the freedom of the good programme-makers is being removed. The argument in the Peacock report that freedom means freedom for the entrepreneur is buttressed by the Government's Green Paper on radio, which was produced while we were discussing the Bill in Committee. Contracts are also involved in commercial radio, although not necessarily under the three——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is interesting, but it has nothing to do with the Bill. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not pursue that line and will return to this narrow, limited Bill.

Mr. Buchan: I am thinking hard so that I can try to follow that path.

I say merely that, during the three years when people will discuss the nature of the contracts, inevitably they will be guided by the Peacock report and the principles embodied in it, in relation to commercial television. No doubt that will be affected by the Green Paper, in which the removal of regulation and control in radio is also advocated. That buttresses my questioning of the intentions during the three-year extension of the contracts. I am concerned about the removal of controls from commercial radio and the imposition of the obligation to —I fear that you are rising again, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not yet.

Mr. Buchan: Only part of what I said is out of order, however.

If the obligations on the BBC are retained, at the same time, a sort of ghetto in our broadcasting will be created. The public service sector will be expected to serve the proper need to inform, educate and entertain while the commercial sector will be free to make money. Indeed, broadcasting will be regulated, but because of the presence of the BBC it will not matter. The BBC will continue to provide programmes of high quality. Therefore, we do not need to impose that obligation upon the commercial sector. That is the background to the contracts.

There has been an accretion of power and wealth within the popular press. Those who are likely to be involved in the contracts will include two of the three main monopolies that I described, to wit Murdoch and Maxwell. They will have enormous control over the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Bill has nothing to do with people named Maxwell or Murdoch. It is concerned with the Independent Broadcasting Authority. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will either resume his seat or discuss that matter.

Mr. Buchan: I agree that the Bill does not refer to Mr. Maxwell or Mr. Murdoch, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Therefore, I shall say that two unnamed people control that part of the press. Within that context, such people will be parties to the contract.

We want the Minister to establish some ground rules to ensure that contracts will properly reflect the interests and needs of Parliament. It must be in order to refer to Parliament. It represents the community and the public. Therefore, it will endorse the principles of public service broadcasting. We would be remiss, even within this narrow Bill, if we did not hear such issues. I hope that the Minister, when the time comes to consider the nature of the contracts, will bear in mind the survival of public service broadcasting, diversity of opinion and diversity of programmes. The Home Secretary and that rather superior being, the Prime Minister, disturb me in relation to their attitudes towards a free market and placing the jewel in the crown of British civilisation — the broadcasting service—into the hands of two, three or, at the most, four entrepreneurs.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

LEGAL AID AND ADVICE (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 5th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Question agreed to.

Nurses' Pay and Conditions

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

8.32 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I intend to speak at a little length about nurses' pay and conditions of work. The House will know that I am sponsored by COHSE — the Confederation of Health Service Employees. It has supplied me with writtten evidence that it and others have put before the pay review board that was set up by the Government in 1984. I hope that the Minister has read and digested that document. It is a powerful indictment of what the Government have or have not done for nurses in the past six or seven years. That written evidence is agreed not only by COHSE but, for the first time in a long while, by virtually all other professional organisations associated with the nursing profession. I refer to midwives, health visitors, and all organisations normally associated with moderation within the Health Service.

Before I refer to nurses' pay and conditions, I shall make a brief comment about Project 2000. At a later stage in this Session of Parliament, a separate debate might be initiated by me or by another hon. Member specifically on the proposals made by the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing and Midwifery on nursing training and education, which is the basis of Project 2000. Clearly, at this stage I shall not go into the merits of the 25 recommendations that it made. It is common knowledge that the population is aging. The number of people over the age of 75, and even over 85, is increasing. At the other end of the scale, there is a decreasing number of young qualified people whom one would expect to look after the aging population. Within that context, the principle is generally agreed that aging people are better looked after in the community rather than in institutions, whether they be hospitals, nursing homes, or whatever.

One cannot save money on the implementation of community care. If we are properly to conduct community care, carers—whether they be in institutions or in the community—must be adequately qualified and paid. Community care is not a cheap option. Until now, the Government appear to have considered it to be a cheap option. There must surely be a comprehensive rethink of the ways in which we recruit, train, reward and retain the personnel needed to perform such services. It is my view —I think it is widely shared—that we shall never get such personnel in sufficient numbers and with the necessary human and academic qualifications unless we are ready to offer them much greater incentives, whether they be pay, promotion, accommodation holidays, or sick pay incentives.

As the Prime Minister said in another context when the Falklands war was being fought, "Whatever the cost, we had to win." There was no question of cash limits or anything like that. I use those words in this context. Whatever the cost, we have to meet the challenge. We cannot afford not to meet it.

There is broad agreement that the present pay and working conditions of our hospital and working staff—whether they be ancillary, health visitors or district nurses —are patently inadequate and are creating problems in recruitment and retention on a worrying scale. I hope that

the Minister will give us figures to contradict that fact or will tell the House what the Government propose to do to solve the problems.

The pay review machinery that was established in 1984 has done nothing to alleviate the problems The level of pay during training, after qualification and at maximum levels of basic pay are unattractive compared with the pay and conditions of other public servants. Startling evidence on this point was given by the staff side. The staff side document refers to police pay. No Opposition Member begrudges the police their increase in pay. They do a very good and dangerous job; but so do nurses.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hamilton: The Minister is nodding assent; she knows what I am talking about.

When he enters the police force, a man does not have similar qualifications to those of a student nurse, but he starts on £7,752 a year, while a student nurse starts on £4,325 a year. Assuming that a policeman is not promoted, after 16 years in the profession he is paid £12,936, an increase of more than £5,000. When a student nurse becomes a staff nurse, she receives £7,750. After eight years she is still on £7,750, assuming that she, too, has not been promoted. A policeman receives roughly £100 a week more than the fully qualified, highly trained and experienced staff nurse.

Nobody in the country could pretend that after 16 years' service a policeman is a more valuable citizen than a staff nurse. The only difference is that the one is almost invariably a man whereas the other is almost invariably a woman. I appeal to a woman Minister to defend that, if she can.

A case came before the High Court yesterday about equal pay for work of equal value. If the nurses' professional organisations challenged the facts I have just given in the courts and said, "We assert that the work nurses are doing is equal in value to the work that is done by policemen; therefore, their pay ought to be the same as that of policemen", I am certain that they would win their case.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Does my hon. Friend think that members of this highly skilled profession will be attracted by the offer of work outside this country and that there will be a nurses' drain? I draw his attention to an advertisement two weeks ago in the *Nursing Times and Nursing Mirror* in which British nurses were offered $35,000 a year in California and absolutely exemplary conditions of service. That is over £23,000 a year. I am not suggesting for one second that nurses should be paid as much as that, but I ask my hon. Friend to remember that there could be a nursing drain if something is not done to improve the pay and conditions of employment of nurses.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is a doctor and speaks with a good deal of experience. I shall deal with that point in due course. He knows as well as I do that Americans have recently been recruiting Scottish nurses for hospitals in Texas.

As for the exchanges on this matter during the Budget debate, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury referred—as the Prime Minister has done on many occasions at the Dispatch Box in the last few months—to the £155 a week nurse. There are not many of those about in the National Health Service. However, the Chief Secretary took that as a typical case and said that as a result of the Government's very generous Budget the £155 a week nurse would get back £2·64 a week as a result of the reduction of 2p in the standard rate of tax. That is broadly true, but I remind the House that when the pay board recommended last year an 8 per cent. increase for nurses the Government gave them 6 per cent., because they froze it for three months. Therefore, the staff nurse who has been given back £2·64 had £3 a week taken off her last year because of the Government's reaction to the pay board's recommendations. Therefore, she is worse off now than she was a year ago.

Last Wednesday, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury also claimed that

"in real terms the income of nurses"—

not a nurse—

"is up by 33 per cent. since 1979."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1987; Vol. 112, c. 960.]

The Opposition and many people outside Parliament now treat the Chief Secretary's figures on any subject with extreme caution and suspicion. I asked the House of Commons Library to produce some figures for me. They differ substantially from those that were implied in the Chief Secretary's statement. My figures relate to gross pay on maximum scales. In real terms, taking account of inflation, a first year student nurse is 1·8 per cent. worse off now than she was in 1979. In real terms, a staff nurse on the maximum of her scale is 13·2 per cent. better off. We all welcome that. Nevertheless, although the Government boast about the marvellous success of the economy since 1979, they can only say that a staff nurse has had an increase in real terms of less than 2 per cent. each year since 1979. A ward sister has had an increase, in real terms, of 21·5 per cent. during that period, or of 3 per cent., in real terms, each year. Only yesterday, *The Independent* said that last year company directors had an average salary increase of 10 per cent.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): One looks at figures of real wages and inflation with very different eyes, depending on the side of the Chamber upon which one sits. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point about directors' pay, and I do not doubt that one could find even more bizarre examples. For a Government not only to match inflation but to increase pay in real terms by 2 and 3 per cent. per annum for each of the years between 1979 and 1983 is a substantial achievement. In view of that, the hon. Gentleman should not overplay his broad case.

Mr. Hamilton: This Government are about the meanest that we have had since the end of the war, and that is reflected in the way that they have dealt with nurses' pay and conditions. I shall shortly give the nurses' reaction to the Budget. They do not accept for one minute that they have been treated other than meanly by the Government. With all their trumpets blaring, the Government established a pay review board to give an independent assessment for nurses and take them out of the heat of political controversy. It has done nothing of the kind, because on every occasion that the board has made recommendations the Government have overturned or reduced them.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) is right when he says that the real earnings of nurses have gone up. But so have the real earnings of other people, and, compared to them, nurses have fared badly. Let not the

[Mr. Hamilton]

Government take any credit, because they sought to resist all kinds of wage increases. Even now the Government and the Confederation of British Industry are saying that these "unfair and unjustified" wage increases must be stopped. Now the Government claim credit for them.

Let us be under no illusion about what has happened. Whatever increases nurses or any other workers are getting, they are getting them in the face of ruthless opposition by the Government. There is no question about that. Because of the poor conditions of female nurses, they are voting with their feet by either getting out of the profession or refusing to come into it. I shall give one or two examples of what is happening. The Minister will have read in *The Guardian* of 20 March about the state of the West Middlesex hospital. *The Guardian* said:

"The West Middlesex hospital in Hounslow, which provides accident cover for Heathrow Airport, is to divert all ambulance and GP emergency cases to neighbouring hospitals while two wards are emptied and closed. 'We have reached such a crisis point in nursing levels that we just can't keep them open,' Mr. John Branczik, the unit general manager, said last night."

The unit general manager went on to say:

"The hospital has 180 nursing vacancies out of a complement of 640, and is regularly relying on more than 100 agency nurses to keep going. We are in a real crisis. We have an excellent nursing school with high standards, but we have simply got to ease the strain and make the job more fulfilling."

I was in touch this morning with the unions at that hospital and they tell me that the figures are not quite as bad as the figures that the unit manager was reported in *The Guardian* as quoting. The unions told me that currently there are 107 nursing vacancies and that the hospital authorities have been trying to recruit in Scotland and Ireland but have failed because there is a lack of accommodation in and around Hounslow. I was told that no emergency cases have been admitted to the hospital in the last four to five months and that it has been on red alert since March 1986. I was told that last week two medical wards were closed because of shortage of staff.

Despite that, the health authority has decided to sell nurses' accommodation in order to raise £750,000. It has also decided that it would like to take on youngsters from the youth training scheme to work in the wards. Quite rightly, that has been violently opposed by the trade unions. I was told that two months ago the health authority tried to force nurses to work 12-hour shifts. Again, there was fierce opposition by the trade unions, and they were absolutely right to react in that way.

I am told that the health authority took a decision to pay the private Royal Masonic hospital in Hammersmith £150,000 to carry out hip operations for which the Health Service could not cater. That £150,000 was provided by the Department to reduce the waiting lists in the National Health Service. The Government's boast is that they have reduced waiting lists. To do that, they have handed £150,000 to the profit-making private sector. The Prime Minister repeatedly says that the National Health Service is safe in her hands. It is about as safe in her hands as a lamb among a pack of wolves. She does not even use the Health Service herself.

I shall quote from *The Independent* another example of what is happening. On 16 March that newspaper had a headline which said:

"NHS losing 1,000 nurses a year to private sector".

Those nurses are trained at great public expense. The private sector does not train them. Taxpayers pay for that and then the nurses are taken into the predominantly American-financed private sector.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Poaching.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend says that that is poaching. That is a polite way of describing it. Nurses are going into the private sector hospitals or nursing homes after being trained at our expense. As the article in *The Independent* makes clear, the demand from the private sector is rising as the Government encourage the growth of private profit-making hospitals and homes. I have given one or two examples and I shall give one or two others. I quote from the March 1987 issue of the journal of the Confederation of Health Service Employees, my own union. The journal says that staffing cuts kill the patient. I shall quote directly from the article. It says:

"Savage cuts in staffing levels led directly to the death of a 62-year-old woman in a Glasgow hospital.

June Thomson bled to death on the renal unit of the Western Infirmary because a shortage of nurses meant that none could be spared to sit with her and check her condition constantly.

As a result, an arterial shunt stitched into her ankle came loose and she died within 10 minutes. Nurses had been able to carry out checks only every 15 minutes that night."

It continues:

"A sheriff's court inquiry into the death cleared nursing staff of all blame and found that staff to patient ratios were inadequate and had been for many years."

Figures compiled by COHSE, Scottish region, show that between 18 April and 1 September last year Greater Glasgow health board slashed 326 nursing posts on top of a loss of 750 nursing posts between 1982 and April 1986. That is one more example of what is going on in the Health Service today.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) referred in an intervention to the brain drain of nurses going abroad. An example of this was reported in the Scottish newspapers a few days ago. A leading Dallas hospital is recruiting Scottish nurses and offering many young nurses more than twice their present salaries. The unions and others in authority are reported as saying:

"It's appalling that we're spending about £25,000 to train student nurses and losing them to the private sector, Saudi Arabia or the United States".

The newspaper article continues:

"The Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, which faces a severe shortage of nurses, is recruiting in Edinburgh and Glasgow. It offers starting salaries of between £14,000 and £15,400 with extra payments, and benefits adding 18 per cent. to the package.

Ms. Elizabeth McLaren, secretary of the Royal College of Nursing's Scottish Board, said she was very sad, but not surprised, at the prospect of losing young people to this golden opportunity."

Ms. McLaren is quoted as saying:

"The Dallas team have picked the right pychological moment to come, with so much unrest, the tremendous stresses, the salary problem and in many places the quite atrocious conditions."

She felt that it was especially serious to lose nurses when the birth rate was falling and that a chronic shortage could be expected by 1990 unless conditions were made far more attractive.

In the light of those comments, I come to the Chief Secretary's remarks in the Budget debate and to my exchanges with the Chancellor at Question Time today. When I asked the Chancellor about the nurses' response to his Budget proposals, he said that it must be good

because he was taking 2p off the standard rate of income tax. The 25-31 March edition of *Nursing Times*—not a Labour party magazine, but one for decent, moderate, gentle nursing folk—commented that

"in overall terms, the Budget gives the 'average' nurse just about enough money to buy a weekly bottle of cheap wine . . . but with nothing left to celebrate."

The same edition states:

"Staff nurse Judith Gosmore, who works at London's Westminster Hospital, will get an extra £1·89 in her weekly pay packet thanks to last week's budget."

There is a photograph of her. She seems a very nice girl, but not too prosperous. She looks as though she could do with a good meal, but she will not get one for £1·89. The article continues:

"But she is less than impressed. 'I want a decent salary instead of a paltry tax reduction,' said Ms. Gosmore. Ms. Gosmore is paid the minimum staff nurse salary of £6475 and will, as a result of the budget, now have a take-home pay packet of £88·80 per week."

That is a disgrace to a society that presumes to be prosperous and civilised.

"'After five more years as a staff nurse, I will be paid a maximum of £7750 (at current rates),' she says. 'This is £2 per year less than a raw recruit into the police force receives after only 20 weeks training.'"

The extract gives many more examples. It is like a Labour party propaganda sheet. It states:

"Last week, West Middlesex Hospital announced its accident and emergency department—one of the busiest in west London—would take only life and death cases to allow it to close wards."

It quotes the unit's general manager, whom I have already quoted, as saying:

"We are 180 nurses short in an establishment of 640".

It continues:

"Many hospitals in London and the home counties are embarking on employment drives in areas of high unemployment."

Ealing health authority has been looking around in Dundee, Newcastle and Belfast.

In its report on the control of nursing manpower, published in February 1986, the all-party Public Accounts Committee said:

"The prospect of a future shortage of nurses is a most serious matter of direct importance to patients, and we expect the DHSS to consider urgently what needs to be done, calling upon whatever expert advice is available."

I should like to know what has happened since that report was published. One year on, the staffing problems seem to be worse than ever. According to evidence that we are receiving from all over the country, recruitment and wastage problems show no sign of solution; on the contrary, they are probably getting worse.

Page 12 of the staff side document states:

"The last few years have seen significant falls in the number of recruits to the schools of nursing. In the past year alone there has been a decline of 7·7 per cent. in the numbers applying to enter student training and a decline of 20·3 per cent. in the number applying to enter pupil training."

It also refers to an

"unacceptably high level of national vacancies especially in the staff midwife and tutorial grades".

The recruitment difficulties are exacerbated by the high wastage rates. People leave nursing for many reasons, either during their training or after it, but research studies show that wastage rates from training were as high as 35 per cent. for RGN courses and 30 per cent. for EN courses. Fewer qualified nurses left, but I believe that a wastage figure of up to 15 per cent. after qualification is no exaggeration.

The survey conducted by COHSE found that the problem may be even worse than the figures show. Nurses were asked a variety of questions, and it was found that 59 per cent. of nurses and nursing auxiliaries had left the NHS or were seriously considering leaving. The figures can be nothing but disturbing to anybody who has the welfare of the Health Service at heart.

In June 1986 Mr. Peach, then the chairman of the National Health Service management board, acknowledged the "stark" recruitment problems. He did not refer to inadequate pay as the prime cause.

On page 16 of the report it is stated:

"The results of the RCN and COHSE surveys demonstrate the extent of discontent in nursing and midwifery — discontent associated primarily with staffing levels and pay levels. The surveys also revealed that the majority of those still working in the NHS adjudged increased pay levels to be a major factor likely to influence retention rates. The RCN surveys of midwifery vacancies over three years indicate that there has been no improvement in recruitment and retention."

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does my hon. Friend agree that other factors involved are greater overwork, overstrain and responsibility because of technological advances in recent years?

Mr. Hamilton: I could go on about that for three hours. I suspect that the Minister has not read the document. I hope that she will make it compulsory reading before the Government respond to the review body's recommendations. Those recommendations should be in the Minister's possession within days.

Nursing is a grossly overworked profession. The overwork, the strain and the stress are having serious effects, in both the short and the long term, on the quality of work.

On page 20 of the document, paragraph 5.11 refers to the health visitor grade, and states:

"The alteration in internal relativities created by the Review Body's downgrading of the health visitor grade in 1985 remains unacceptable to the Staff Side. The basis on which the clinical grading review is being undertaken is to examine the extent to which clinical expertise, professional responsibility and relevant additional qualifications and experience can assist in the determination of equitable pay levels. In this context, the downgrading of the health visitor grade because it does not carry a significant level of managerial responsibility is a retrograde step. Like other groups of qualified nursing and midwifery staff, health visitors undertake additional training, and possess a range of skills which cannot be adequately reflected in the current grading system. The degree of independence with which health visitors conduct their duties and the requirement for a range of clinical and communication skills are factors which cannot be ignored, and should not be undervalued in the establishment of a responsive pay grading system."

Anybody who knows anything about health visitors must accept that they take important decisions as they move round the community day after day. As we move towards a wider acceptance of community care, so the health visitor will become more and more important. It is time that we thought seriously about upgrading that worthy profession.

Another pay review body report is imminent. I think that the Government expect that report by 1 April. The evidence of the Government to that body has been leaked. The Minister knows what I am talking about. The Government have said more or less precisely what the Chief Secretary said about nurses — they have been doing rather too well in the last six or seven years and it

[Mr. Hamilton]

is time that it stopped. The Government have said to the review body, "Make sure that you do not give them more than a minimal increase."

It is already written in the cash allocations to health authorities that the increase shall not be more than 3·75 per cent. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has already admitted that by mid-summer of this year the rate of inflation will be 4·5 per cent. If the Government's recommendation to the pay review body is accepted, the nurses will be faced with a real cut in salaries in the next 12 months. I say to the Minister that that is completely unacceptable not only to Labour Members but to the British people. Whatever pay increase is given, even if it is just 3·75 per cent., if the Government run true to form they will say to the health boards: "You already have 3·75 per cent. written into your cash allocations. Anything above that will have to be paid for by cuts in other parts of your services."

I want some assurances from the Minister. First, that the Government will immediately respond to whatever recommendations are made and that they will not be held over until after the general election, whenever that might come. Secondly, we want the Prime Minister's response to be as sharp, quick and unequivocal as it was when the Top Salaries Review Body made its recommendations some two years ago when, without the flicker of an eyelid, the Prime Minister said that every top civil servant, judge, admiral and general in the Army shall receive increases of £40, £50, and £60 a week. Nurses are in a different category. I hope that the Prime Minister and the Government will respond as generously to the nurses as they did to the Army, Navy and Air Force — the generals, air commodores, and so on.

The Government have gone further in their evidence to the pay review body. They have said not only that they want minimal increases, but that they want pay determined locally, not nationally. They want payments to be given for specific skills and target payments for unpopular types of work. I do not know how those matters would be worked out, but the health authorities would have a miserable job if those recommendations were to come into effect. The Government want job sharing, part-time work, and so on.

The Minister has a case to make, and no doubt she will plead poverty; but in the last several weeks — and we shall see this increasingly over the next few weeks as we move towards a general election—the Government have been trying as hard as they can to sell to the public their wonderful success story to the effect that the economy has never been stronger and is getting stronger by the day. We are getting sunshine all the way. Santa Claus is coming every week. We shall drink, laugh and be merry. Our future is set fair. But that is not true for nurses. Even if half the Government's claims were true, the nurses would be in for a substantial increase. The Government might even have said that, although the pay review body recommended only 10 per cent., they thought that the nurses deserved 20 per cent. There is not a hope in hell of the Government doing that.

It is too late for the debate to influence the review body's recommendation. I understand that. But I want to ask the Minister some questions and I hope that she will give us frank answers, although I fear that she is not in any position to do that. I know that she will not reply to them, but I want to put them on the record.

Will the Minister give an assurance that for the first time since the inception of the pay review body machinery the Government will accept its recommendations in full without qualification? Will she say categorically that those increases will be financed with additional money, without insisting that the cash for the increases must come from cuts in other parts of the service? Those are not extravagant requests. I hope that there will be a statement from the Government on those matters before the Easter recess.

The British taxpayers, with their sense of fair play—all public opinion polls show that that is the case—are more than ready to foot whatever bills need to be met to make our NHS once again the envy of the world. I hope that the Minister accepts that. I hope that she understands the strength of feeling in the country as the British people see the Health Service decaying all the time. It is not safe in the Government's hands. The sooner we get rid of the Government, the better for the sake of the Health Service, the nurses and all who serve in it.

9.22 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): I always had a rather grudging respect for the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton). I always saw him, even if I did not agree with him, as a doughty fighter and a man of some considerable integrity. I am sure that his standards are as high as ever as he contemplates his journey southwards, but I was disappointed at the way in which he introduced this important subject this evening. Nurses' pay is an important subject and it is certainly taken seriously by my hon. Friend the Minister and others of my colleagues.

It is ever so slightly sanctimonious of the hon. Gentleman to bewail the plight of nurses as if it were a plight that suddenly arrived under this Government, ignoring the fact that it was this Government who introduced the independent pay review body and recruited an additional 55,000 nurses into the profession—26,000 full-time equivalents — after taking account of the reduced number of working hours per week that the Government gave to the nurses. The hon. Gentleman also ignored the fact that since 1979 nurses' pay, after taking account of inflation, has risen on average by more than 10 per cent.

On that latter point we heard the most extraordinary nonsense from the hon. Gentleman. He seriously suggested that it was somehow an indictment of the Government that not only had nurses' pay kept pace with inflation, but their pay had increased by only 3 per cent. in real terms for every year that the Government have been in office. That was not enough. He described this Government — I think these were his words — as the meanest Government in history. All I can say is that if we are a mean Government, it beggars description of the previous Labour Government who supervised the only real terms reduction in nurses' pay, when compared with inflation, since the inception of the Health Service. It is frankly appalling to hear the hon. Member for Fife, Central describe the present position in such terms.

I was extremely sorry that the hon. Gentleman, by overplaying his hand, masked the real problem—a problem that any responsible Member should be prepared to examine. I have been interested in nurses' pay for many

years. I was involved in a health authority for many years before coming to this House, and indeed for some years after I was elected. I have probably more Health Service workers than car workers in my constituency. Some of the largest and most complex hospital installations are in my constituency — the John Radcliffe, the Churchill, the Nuffield, the Warneford, the Littlemore and the Park hospital. Nurses' pay is an important issue and I am one of the few hon. Members, drawn from both sides of the House, who is a member of the Royal College of Nursing parliamentary panel.

I hope that we shall have some serious discussion about nurses' pay as a result of tonight's debate. I believe that nurses still do not get paid anything like enough. That in no way detracts from the achievements of the Government, which have been substantial and in stark contrast to the Labour party's record. It is in no sense a betrayal of the Conservative party's record. The Government have done what they can at a time when the economy has been going through a difficult period. Indeed, it is not often that a Chancellor can produce a Budget similar to that presented last week. Indeed, my right hon. Friend made plain—and any common sense observer would agree—that he was only able to produce such a Budget because we had dragged the economy round from an especially difficult period. Nevertheless, during that time we have made progress on nurses' pay, but I believe that substantially more needs to be done.

I believe that the urgency of the problem is accentuated by a reduction in potential recruits for nursing. In 1982, among school-leaving age girls, there were about 1 million potential recruits for nursing. By 1992, on demographic grounds alone, that number will be reduced to 600,000. That represents a 40 per cent. reduction in available intake and does not take into account the fact that recruits must have five O-levels and two A-levels. No one wishes the technical and educational standards to drop, but such standards further reduce the catchment of potential recruits.

The necessity for recruitment will place further pressure on nursing conditions. As well as pay, we must consider most carefully the question of training. The hon. Gentleman, during his lengthy speech, mentioned the considerable drop-out rate from training. I shall also mention the drop-out rate among qualified nurses. It is reported that a third of those training, taking account of both courses, do not complete their course. It is important to try to ensure that that figure is reduced. The hon. Gentleman and I are ad idem on that.

I do not believe that that fall-out can be marked down to students not knowing what they want to do. The problem represents a vicious circle. Inadequate numbers of staff mean that trainees are used as ballast to do jobs for which they have not yet received proper training. They are concerned about the level of responsibilities that they must accept, and as a result they feel they are placed under considerable extra pressure — arguably more than we should place upon them.

An interesting exercise recently carried out by the Royal College of Nursing—I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of that exercise—suggested that more technically advanced training for nurses resulted in a higher retention rate. In other words, nurses felt that they were receiving the right academic input. That is a pointer for deferring nurses' training to polytechnics and other institutions rather than specifically and wholly within hospitals. Nurses felt better about their job and their commitment to the service. If more than 60 per cent. of those who enter the service do not complete their training, we have little chance of matching the need on the wards by fully qualified staff.

There is a problem with the private rented sector in Oxford because of the pressure of student numbers. It is an undeniable fact that in Oxford a nurse cannot afford to rent accommodation in the private sector. Demand ensures that rents are extremely high, but there are solutions to the problem which lie within the private rented sector. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction has creative proposals to deal with the problem.

It is ironic that with such a heavy demand on the private rented sector there should be 600,000 to 700,000 units of accommodation standing empty. The relevance of the high pressure on the private rented sector in a place such as Oxford is that it impinges on the Griffiths review of nurses' accommodation, and there is a danger of health authorities reacting rather over-zealously to the Griffiths recommendations. The report made it clear that health authorities own a great deal of accommodation that they should not have, and that is right. Health boards were found to have houses dotted around towns in which were found engineers, superintendent cleaners and technicians, but not nurses. The houses were occupied by those who happened to know the man who had the key to the letting register. There appeared to be no logic attached to the authorities' policy of letting houses, and that was clearly not in the interests of the service.

We must be careful to distinguish that problem from the other real problems which arise from the high cost of renting in certain areas. We must think seriously about the provision of more upgraded nursing accommodation. Unless we do that, it will be extremely difficult to retain nursing staff, especially in an area such as Oxford.

An even more worrying symptom is that there is a wastage rate of about 10 per cent. within the 300,000 nurses employed in the NHS, which means a loss of about 30,000 nurses per annum. The hon. Member for Fife, Central has alleged that many nurses decide to go to Saudi Arabia or America to earn more money. I am glad that he shakes his head, but I am sure that there are some nurses who do that, and it is understandable. One of the great attractions of working in the United States was that the top rate of tax — until my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced his most recent Budget—was one percentage point lower than the basic rate of tax that a nurse would pay in Britain. I pass over that consideration because the implications will not be lost on the hon. Gentleman.

By far the greater reason for nurses leaving the profession is that of marriage. As they settle into their lives they find that their hours are antisocial, that the work is difficult and that they have difficulty in coming to terms with shift work. When they have had their families they have no contact with the Health Service because there are inadequate contact link schemes to encourage them back.

Dr. M. S. Miller: As nurses are essential to the Health Service, should they not be made a special case?

Mr. Norris: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that the Government's actions prove that they believe that the nurses should be treated as a special case. I shall not

[Mr. Norris]

reiterate the reasons for that because I advanced them at the beginning of my speech. I hope that the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) will follow what I am saying. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security and to other Ministers in the Department that there should be an urgent scrutiny of some of the measures that could be employed to ensure a higher retention rate among trained nurses and a better response rate from those who leave the profession and who could eventually, as trained recruits, be persuaded back into it.

Ninety per cent. of nurses are women. If that is likely to remain the proportion as between male and female nurses, I suggest to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that we need to develop more positive policies to manage the career break that is caused by the family. We must provide better child care facilities for those nurses with the problem of a young family but who would enjoy the extra income and the opportunity to make the commitment that nursing involves. We must provide them with flexible shift work and perhaps more part-time work within the Health Service. We should organise better back-to-nursing courses for those who have been out of the profession and want to retrain to ensure that they are au fait with current techniques and can go back on the wards with confidence.

If only we could cut the wastage rate from 10 per cent. to 9 per cent., we could keep 3,000 more trained nurses in the system who would not have to be replaced by staff who must be trained at a cost running into tens of thousands of pounds per head. I urge that action on my hon. Friend because, as she will readily acknowledge, it is cost effective. At present, there is an appalling waste of economic and human resources. The human resources are the more important. It is terrible that we should spend so much on them, only to see them slip away so easily and apparently irrecoverably.

The Government's record is one of which they and my hon. Friend can justly be proud. It is wholly consistent with that to say that nurses remain among the highest priority groups for further special attention from the Government. The Government have increased their spending from £7,750 million in 1978-79 to nearly £19,000 million this year. Their whole approach has been one of strong, firm commitment to the Health Service. I am sure that the Government will take note of what has been said in this important debate. I look forward to hearing from my hon. Friend what she thinks she can do in the short term and, with her colleagues, in the long term about the urgent matter of nurses' pay.

9.37 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) and the Minister for allowing me to participate in the debate. My hon. Friend made a first-class, detailed contribution to the debate, to which he brings his experience as a member of an organisation that represents nurses throughout the Health Service.

The speech of the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) was exactly as I would have expected it to be. He backed up, supported and protected the Government and took away the Minister's job. No doubt the Minister will make exactly the same remarks when she speaks.

My hon. Friend will probably remember — Conservative Members will not — that not many days ago nurses and student nurses lobbied this place. I met nurses who work in one of the hospitals in my constituency. Indeed, I took it upon myself to meet other nurses from hospitals in Conservative constituencies simply because Conservative Members did not respond to the green cards that came in with regard to the people who were lobbying. It may be, judging by the speech of the hon. Member for Oxford, East, that he does not understand the problem. He would do so if he met the nurses who provide the services which we so desperately need within the National Health Service. We have a total responsibility to the nursing service and to the marvellous people who provide it.

Mr. Norris: Is the hon. Gentleman alleging, as he skates rapidly over his allegations, that I would not be interested in meeting nurses from my constituency or have not done so on the occasion either of the last lobby or of any other lobby? In the absence of any confirmation of that, would the hon. Gentleman like to list those hon. Members, whether from Conservative or Labour constituencies, whose nurses came to visit them and who were not available to see them?

Mr. Haynes: I should be here until midnight if I reeled off all the constituencies and the names of the people who came from the nursing service to lobby the House of Commons. What I am saying is fact; it is the truth. Conservative Members did not carry out their responsibilities as far as that lobby was concerned. I have made the point and that is the end of it. They all ought to be here listening to what is being said.

I have had experience of the nursing service in a different way. Last year, on 30 September, I was unlucky enough to land in a hospital bed, so I have experience of the situation right at the work point of nurses.

As the Minister knows, I am a member of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration Select Committee. We get all sorts of information about the National Health Service in that Committee because so many things go wrong. When we discuss the problems of the nursing service, the difficulties in providing the service because of shortage of numbers emerge loud and clear. That was what I experienced when I was in hospital for nearly a month in September and October last year.

I had a fairly serious operation and I was pretty poorly for the first couple of days after it. What really acted as a pick-me-up was the note I received from you, Mr. Speaker. I realise that there are many hon. Members, 649 plus yourself, Sir, and you cannot keep tabs on everybody but are dependent on information filtering through. I was hoping that you would not come back to the Chair tonight so that I could say this in your absence, but I feel that it must be said. If any hon. Member has a problem of that kind and Mr. Speaker gets to know about it, he acts immediately. I know that I have said this privately, Mr. Speaker, but I want to do so publicly and I feel that I should do so. The little note that you wrote to me was a real pick-me-up. I thought, "Mr. Speaker is bothered about me being in this bed and he is looking forward to me being back in the House again". That I shall never forget, and I thank you very sincerely for it.

The nurses in Harvey ward No. 2 in Nottingham hospital were marvellous. A person who goes into hospital

always says when he comes out that the nurses who provided the service were first class. But often there are too few nurses. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration Select Committee has received far too many reports of things having gone wrong in the Health Service. For example, it is wrong that unqualified nurses should be responsible for a ward. That reflects the shortage of nurses in the NHS and the many other problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central referred. We should all be worried about what is happening and collectively do something about it.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central mentioned training. It is disturbing and a tragedy that the number of students in the nurse training school in my area has been reduced. The more nurses there are in the school, the more nurses will qualify, and the more nurses will fill the shortages. If there are more students, surely that must help youngsters leaving school and reduce the massive unemployment list. I do not know whether such training reductions are occurring nationwide. In my area there were disastrous effects on the number of nurses who could qualify at the end of their full training and on the number who could be allocated to ward work.

I compliment the nurses who looked after me in Harvey ward No. 2, the consultant, Mr. Patrick Bates, and his junior staff. They provide a first-class service in the difficult conditions created by the fact that sufficient financial resources are not available for them to carry out their job properly.

It will always be argued that we must look more seriously at the Health Service. The hon. Member for Oxford, East spoke as though everything in the garden was lovely, but the garden is not lovely. There are some awful things in it which reflect on patient lists. If patients cannot get the service which they require, they are shoved on to the waiting lists. The hon. Member for Oxford, East and the Under-Secretary of State know that hon. Members have expressed their views on waiting lists. I felt that I had to speak in the debate on my feelings about the NHS, the nursing service, the massive team of consultants and the junior doctors who, incidentally, from time to time get a raw deal.

But tonight we are talking about nurses' pay and conditions. We all believe that they do a first-class job. No matter which party is in government, it has a responsibility to give those nurses the right pay for the job. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central said, many people get more than their fair share. There is no doubt about that in respect of those in the top income bracket. I was a little surprised that the hon. Member for Oxford, East spoke about that because he left himself out. Members of Parliament have had much larger pay increases than nurses in the NHS. He omitted to mention that. We are not on our own. Many other people in different jobs and work places are getting a lot more in increased earnings than the nurses. The Government should accept and live with their responsibilities and pay the nurses the right pay for the job. When they receive their just earnings, all of us will be a lot happier, including the nurses and the patients. After all, the reason for the National Health Service coming into being was to provide the service that patients require.

9.56 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I wish to intervene only briefly because I have a long journey to make to my home. Some of us live many hours from London and it takes a long time to return to our constituencies.

I would like to raise two matters. One is the attitude of witnesses before the Public Accounts Committee when evidence is being given on matters relating to nursing manpower. I have now sat through three sessions of questions to the National Health Service management board and also to DHSS officials. I sense that they do not quite know what is going on on the ground.

Following those hearings, I have been approached by nursing organsations outside the House. On one occasion I was approached by a group of journalists who were reporting on the effects of cuts in three regions. Following a series of questions that I asked during the course of one Committee sitting, they provided me with information that was totally at variance with the evidence that was being given to the Select Committee. I do not blame civil servants for that. I understand that they are under instructions from Ministers, and Ministers accept responsibility for what civil servants may say before Select Committees of this House.

There is a major difference betwen those who run the service and those who work for it about what is going on at ground level. The survey by the Confederation of Health Service Employees reflects that difference. That survey, published on 8 March, was on the staffing crisis for nurses in the NHS. It referred to a massive 90 per cent. of nurses saying that staffing levels in their own wards were low or dangerously low. They said that low staffing levels were responsible for falling morale and rising stress.

My hon. Friend mentioned the article that was published in the COHSE paper about staffing cuts killing a patient. I would genuinely like to know what happened there. I hope that the Minister will carry out an inquiry to find out what happened. We want to know. Cut the politics out of it. I want to know why and how this incident happened in a hospital in Scotland. If the Department is at fault, or if the budgets were too low to cover the demand and requirements for health care in that area, then the Minister should be honest and straightforward with the House.

The survey in Scotland compared the conditions of nurses now with two years ago. Eighty-five per cent. of nurses said the quality of care had been adversely affected, and 94 per cent. of those blamed staff shortages. Ninety-one per cent. said that stress levels were higher or much higher, and 88 per cent. of those blamed staff shortages. Eighty-two per cent. said their work load was more or much more. Eighty-four per cent. reported falling morale, and 87 per cent. of those blamed low morale on staff shortages.

The COHSE Scottish regional officer, Jim Devine, said of one hospital:

> "Lennox Castle has notoriously low staffing levels and this survey shows just how badly nurses are affected by that."

When I go round different parts of the country, I make a point of asking nurses — particularly following the Public Accounts Committee proceedings and questions that I have asked of civil servants—what is going on in their hospitals. They repeatedly tell me what has been denied to the PAC—that untrained, unqualified nurses

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

are running wards in the NHS hospitals. It is happening, yet it is being denied. It is unimaginable to me that people who are simply not qualified are required to take on that great responsibility. Furthermore, the nurses tell me that they feel under pressure and stress when they are held responsible for those wards.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) referred correctly to the fact that a large number of nurses in training were lost to the Health Service. It may well be that, while they are untrained, they are unwilling and feel incapable of managing wards and accepting the responsibilities that are placed upon them by the administrations of certain hospitals. I should have thought that that was a legitimate reason for leaving the NHS. People who are untrained cannot be expected to carry that responsibility.

I should have thought that Ministers would wish to carry out a national survey to find out to what extent that is going on and to ensure that it never happens. I will tell the House what happens in hospitals when a mistake is made. There are cover-ups. There have to be because doctors or administrators, finding that the manning arrangements on particular wards at particular times were deficient, automatically try to cover up what has happened when mistakes are made so that there is no reflection on the administrative arrangements governing the management of hospitals. That is not good enough. Cutting out the politics, there must be unanimity across the country that in every ward in every hospital there should be a level of expertise below which no one is asked to administer and to manage.

Perhaps one of the major reasons why we have problems is that many people simply do not accept health care to be the priority that many of us in the House think it is. Part of the reason is the existence of the private sector. Wherever one finds the private sector in what otherwise would be social provision, one finds that the more articulate elements in society — not all, but certainly many — are inclined to route themselves around the social provision. In doing so, they remove themselves from the argument about the quality of service that is provided in the social and, if one might call it such, the free provision paid for by the taxpayer. It is the same in education. The very existence of public schools undermines secondary education because it prevents a real debate developing and it prevents people from addressing the real problems and ensuring that the resources are given to education.

Health care is exactly the same. If one wants to raise standards of health care and ensure that the moneys are made available, one bites into private health. The reverse is happening today. As the provision for private health care is liberalised, key individuals who should play an important part in the debate are being removed from the argument about social provision and medicine.

I only wish that we had a Government who would bite into private health and ensure that a real debate took place about priorities. My view is that if that debate were to take place we would see a massive transfer of resources into education and health. The problems in the nursing profession and in the wider National Health Service will evaporate with the rapid passage of time as people see what is best for the public interest.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall quote from a document entitled, "Project 2000: Nurses-Midwives: How it Affects You" which is produced by the Confederation of Health Service Employees. It refers to aides. It states that the proposal must go. I have raised this matter in the Public Accounts Committee. I reflect only the anger of people who refer such matters to me. The document states:

"Project 2000's proposals to replace existing nursing auxiliaries and assistants with aides is motivated by elitism. The use of the word 'nursing' in existing job titles is a perfectly proper use of the English language."

It goes on to condemn the introduction of the new term "aides". Many people in the National Health Service object to the use of that term. Hon. Members may laugh, but they feel strongly about it. They believe that it is a slight on their profession. The Minister might give us an undertaking that that term will be dropped and that a more respectable term will be introduced to cover the job description of such people who, according to the document, are covered by the proposal.

10.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) for giving us the opportunity to have what has turned out to be quite an extended debate on nurses' pay and some aspects of their work. I hope that hon. Members will excuse me if I do not comment on Project 2000, although it has been mentioned many times, because the consultation process on it is under way and decisions by us are certainly some way off, although we recognise the importance of the proposals. I understand that the final United Kingdom Central Council proposals on it drop the use of the word "aide". In fact, it is replaced by the word "helper", which seems in many ways to be a more respectable word.

The total spend on nurses in Great Britain in 1986-87 is nearly £4 billion. The total cost, among other things, of the 1986-87 pay rise was £201 million. We should add to that another £81 million for other health and community health services staff who are covered by review bodies. In Great Britain, nursing and midwifery staff, including agency nurses, now account for more than 400,000 whole-time equivalent posts. That is about 50 per cent. of all the staff in whole-time equivalent terms—the largest single group who work in the Health Service.

Our nurses are important people. Everyone in the Health Service is important. I was a little disappointed to hear the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) praise only the doctors and nurses who cared for him recently. We would also regard as important laboratory staff, technicians, kitchen staff, ancillaries and indeed everybody who works in the Health Service. Possibly, our nurses are important not only because they are the largest single group but because most nurses have repeatedly refused to strike or to take any action that would damage their patients. That has certainly been true of members of the Royal College of Nursing. I have a feeling that some members of COHSE have taken a rather different view.

I recall, back in 1982, when I was chairman of the central Birmingham health authority, hearing that a

charge nurse had walked out of Birmingham children's hospital in the middle of a dispute and left children on his ward in need of care simply because he was a member of COHSE and took the view that industrial action, which might just damage the interests of his patients, was acceptable. As a result of the action of unions such as COHSE, waiting lists climbed in 1982, as they had done under the previous Government. I look forward to the day when COHSE, like the Royal College of Nursing, decides that it is in the interests of patients and staff that strike action of that kind should be repudiated for good.

I take very much the points that were made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) and other hon. Members about what has happened recently to nurses' pay. I see in his place my shrewd and capable colleague the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens). Recently he asked how much nurses' pay has increased in recent years, in real terms. Today we are able to answer this question. The information is as follows.

Between 1974 and 1979, nurses' pay fell by 21 per cent., in real terms. Since 1979, nurses' pay has increased by 23 per cent., in real terms; and since 1983 nurses' pay has increased by 10 per cent., in real terms. The real increase in percentage terms reflects the percentage cash increase in the pay round year that runs from 1 August, deflated by the RPI increase in the pay round year, in the 12 months to July. If a percentage cash increase, compared with the RPI, of 23 per cent., in real terms, since 1979 is mean, words fail me as to what one might call the cut of 21 per cent., in real terms, under the last Labour Government. A word like "pathetic" might just about do it.

In 1976-77, nurses' pay was cut by 10·7 per cent., in real terms. In one year there was a 10 per cent. cut, in real terms, in nurses' pay. That was 10 years ago, just as we are now celebrating the Lib-Lab pact of those years that helped to keep that despicable Government in office.

I could say even more about that Government's acceptance of review body reports. I recommend hon. Members to read again the diaries of the right hon. Richard Crossman who was Secretary of State in my Department in the late 1960s. On the eve of the 1970 election the entire review body resigned en masse, since he had completely failed to accept the recommendations of the review body for doctors—the main review body in those days.

My hon. Friend the member for Oxford, East was right when he said that we have been pushing the staff much harder. We have been pushing everybody in the National Health Service much harder. We have therefore increased the number of in-patients from 5 million, under the Labour Government, to about 6 million in-patients now, and 37 million out-patient visits are made each year. I noted with interest my hon. Friend's point that the more qualified staff cope better. He may be aware that the proportion of qualified nursing staff has increased from about 54 per cent. to nearly 60 per cent.

As for basic pay rates, on 1 July 1986 there was an 8 per cent. increase in the basic rates for most nurses. Students, pupils and auxiliaries had increases of between 5·5 and 6·5 per cent. The allocation was deliberately skewed in favour of the more highly experienced and highly qualified staff. That was exactly what the review body had suggested. Inflation was then running at 2·4 per cent. It is now running at 3·9 per cent. but the real increase is still very substantial.

On top of the basic pay, many nurses take home far more than the basic rate. There are premium rates for night and weekend work and for overtime, and there are other allowances. The estimated percentage addition to the basic pay for the main grades that form nearly 90 per cent. of NHS nursing and midwifery staff is between 12 per cent. extra for a student and 24 per cent. extra for a nursing auxiliary. That means an enrolled nurse on her maximum basic pay of just over £7,000 can expect, on average, to get another £1,200 as a result of the uplift that I have mentioned. The figures for a nursing auxiliary or a staff nurse are similar. A ward sister whose maximum is £10,800 can expect, on average, 14 per cent. extra for the uplift, and that comes to about an extra £1,500.

At the moment we cannot pay the same sort of rates as the Americans, but merely to quote basic rates of pay is unreliable and unrepresentative. The hon. Gentleman asked a series of questions because, he said, he knew we would not be able at this time to reply to them. He knows that, because he put down a parliamentary question and that is the answer that he received on 5 March. He also knows that some of his questions are for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who, no doubt, will respond to him in no uncertain terms when the time comes.

The hon. Member for Fife, Central asked whether we would accept in full and without qualification the recommendations by the review body, give the additional money and make a statement before the recess. The first report of the review body in 1984 recommended a 7·5 per cent. increase and it was implemented in full. We accepted the recommendations in the second report and staged them slightly to give the Health Service a chance to absorb their impact.

We accepted the amount in the third report in 1986 and deferred the operative date from 1 April to 1 July and gave the health authorities in England, exceptionally, an extra £50 million to maintain the levels of service. Therefore, at different times we have done all the things that the hon. Gentleman demands.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that that is set against the record of a Labour Government that 10 years ago saw fit to cut real pay by 10·7 per cent. The fourth report is awaited and will be submitted not to me, but to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I cannot anticipate the outcome. I hope that when the hon. Gentleman hears the outcome he will be pleased with it and will say so.

Some points were made about the difference between gross pay and net pay, take-home pay. We have worked it out. It is certainly possible for a staff nurse on average gross pay of, perhaps £160 a week to end up taking home only £90 a week after deductions of tax, national insurance and contributions to the superannuation fund and so on. If the Opposition think that that is so dreadful, why on earth do they not support all our campaigns for tax cuts? Why on earth do they not recognise that tax cuts matter just as much to a woman nurse as they do to a male miner or to anybody else?

Those tax cuts matter more to lower paid people, many of whom work in the Health Service, than to the better off. The Opposition should be campaigning for tax cuts and urging us to make even more. They should be urging us to do what has been done in the United States and say that our maximum tax rates are a disgrace and that we ought to get the minimum rate down even further.

Let me remind the House about what Opposition Members said repeatedly in last week's Budget debates.

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

They said that they would put income tax up again. Therefore, they would take even more of a poor nurse's pay than is being taken now. Of course, that is exactly what the last Labour Government did.

I shall now deal with wastage, manpower and nurse staffing levels. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East on his sensible speech which was backed with his experience as a member of a health authority and its vice-chairman for many years. He knows what he is talking about. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Fife, Central does not.

Of course there is wastage. Nursing is substantially a female profession. People marry or have a career break; people go. Year by year we recruit more to fill the gap, and the service given then increases. Not all vacancies are filled by newly qualified nurses. We estimate that about one third are filled by qualified staff returning to the NHS. It follows that a lot of nurses come straight back.

Between September 1979 and September 1985 nursing and midwifery staff in England increased by about 42,700 whole-time equivalents to 401,200—an increase of 12 per cent. As I have said, the proportion of qualified staff also rose. At 31 December 1986, the most recent figures that I was able to obtain, the number of nursing and midwifery staff, excluding agency nurses, was still slightly higher than the previous year, and the trend of recruitment still appears to be slightly upwards. In other words, the disasters described by the hon. Gentleman are not apparent in the figures.

The number entering training in England in the year ending 31 March 1986 was 23,705. There was a decrease of about 7 per cent. over the previous year because the number entering enrolled nurse training dropped by 19 per cent., which seems to have been largely the result of the comments made in Project 2000. Indeed, I was at a press conference at which Dr. Eve Bendall, adviser to the UKCC, said that we seemed to have shot ourselves in the foot on that. The number entering registered nurse training in the same period decreased by only 3 per cent., which roughly paralleled the demographic change in the age cohort from which those women are recruited, so the Opposition's description of our training and recruitment is quite wrong.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) talked about the brain drain. In the year ended 31 March 1986, the UKCC reports that just over 5,000 requests for verification of qualifications were received from the EEC or elsewhere. That is 1 per cent. of the work force. Moreover, we recruit from other countries. Last year, 600 nurses came here from Australia, so they clearly thought that this was a good place to be. I suspect that the girls who go to the United States will find that the only thing that is cheaper there is petrol and that a major factor is the lack of a national health service. Having lived and worked there 20 years ago, I came home convinced that the best thing about our country was our National Health Service. My commitment to it stems from those days and can be traced unbroken through my career. I believe that we are extremely fortunate to have the Health Service run as it is by the Government, and the girls who go to America may return with the same view.

As for the problems of London and the 1,000 nurses per year going into the private sector, I understand that private hospitals in London are also having difficulty recruiting staff. Inner London has lost 2½ million people in recent years, including many of the groups from which we used to recruit staff. That problem affects many employers in London, not just the Health Service. As for nurses leaving the Health Service, we have always trained nurses to go into old people's homes, to work for local authorities or to work in private care facilities. That is a very good thing, because if those facilities were not available the patients would be in the National Health Service, perhaps not always in the comfort and privacy that the private sector can offer, especially in residential care.

In the light of all the anecdotal evidence, the NHS management board commissioned a survey of recruitment and retention problems in a number of different health authorities—not just in London, although London was included. We found that, although in the country as a whole the picture was less gloomy than the anecdotes suggested, there was evidence of shortages in certain key specialties in London and the south-east—in areas such as intensive therapy units, theatres and neo-natal care. One reason may be the lack of any incentive to gain the additional qualifications required for that very stressful work. Recognition of extra qualifications through the pay structure is therefore under review in the negotiating council.

There are, however, a number of areas in which local management can and does take action. One thinks of more flexible employment opportunities—part-time working, employment on a sessional basis, job-sharing, and so on—and much better management of career breaks, a point on which I agree with much that has been said. There are also possibilities for improved training facilities, better recruitment drives, the recruitment of men and of various other groups from which we have not tended to recruit in the past. All those matters are now under active discussion with authorities which have been experiencing difficulties. In all those ways, I believe that we have taken on board many of the problems that have been described.

Our nurses are very special people. We owe them a great deal and we more than any previous Government have recognised that fact. It behoves the House to back what we have tried to do and to recognise the service that nurses try to give and the effort and interest that we have taken in their pay structure, their work, their training and their welfare.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 27 March 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Register of Sasines (Scotland) Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

9.35 am

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am most grateful to hon. Members for their support for this Bill. As my hon. Friends recognised in the debate in Committee on 4 February 1987, this is a modest three-clause Bill which will aid house buyers in Scotland. The sasines register will remain unaltered in its content and availability to the public. However, the Bill will allow the methods of registration to be improved. It will achieve this by removing the present legislative barriers to the use of modern technology and by allowing the Secretary of State to make regulations in respect of methods of operation. In other words, records of deeds may be held in microfiche, or by any other new technological method, rather than in the bound volumes containing copies of the deeds required under present legislation.

That will benefit home buyers in Scotland in two ways. The Department of Registers of Scotland which prepares the sasines register will be able to use released staffing resources to speed up registration processes. However, the main initial advantage will be in providing searchers with several microfiche copies so that they do not have to wait until the bound volume is free.

9.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I record our thanks to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) for sponsoring this legislative measure.

The Bill is not controversial. It will allow welcome improvements to be made in the registration and storage processes of the sasines register in the light of modern technology. I am pleased to say there will be benefits—as the hon. Gentleman has stated—for the public, the Department of Registers of Scotland and the Scottish Record Office which produce and manage the register.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Agricultural Training Board Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered. Order for Third Reading read.

9.37 am

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

First, I should like to thank hon. Members on both sides of the House who have joined in sponsoring the Bill, especially my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and his officials for the advice and assistance that they have given to date. I have received considerable help from them, and I am most grateful. I should like to record my thanks also to the agricultural training board for the guidance that it has given.

This Bill, like the Register of Sasines (Scotland) Bill, is a straightforward and simple measure that seeks to modify two of the constraints on the agricultural training board. First, it modifies the constraint that requires the board to offer training only to people who are involved in agriculture. By so doing, it enables the board to offer training to people outside the industry who are involved in agriculture-based skills and allows it to charge fees for that. That will improve its income-earning potential. Secondly, it enables the board to offer skilled training, in non-agricultural skills, to people involved in agriculture to enable them to diversify in the face of the huge surpluses being produced by the industry.

There is one improving amendment which enables those who have previously been involved in agriculture to be trained. As a result the measure will be useful for the agriculture industry. It will enable the ATB to improve its service to the industry.

I am grateful to the hon. Members who have sponsored the Bill and helped to take it through Committee. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who is a co-sponsor of the Bill, informed me that he could not be present today because he was involved in constituency matters. I am also grateful for his support.

9.41 am

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): We in the alliance welcome this modest Bill, which contains useful proposals, widening the remit of the ATB and encouraging ancillary activities which could be undertaken on farms in association with main agricultural or horticultural businesses.

The proposals have been given added point by the news this week that the ATB, responding to high demand, had to re-run a course on free-range poultry and will next week repeat a course on fish hatchery management. Those are both subjects of diversification which confirm a growing interest in the application of such techniques, and I hope that they will both gain in popularity.

However, the Government should take note that the activities of the ATB will not be a substitute for the recovery of the farming industry. Indeed, I wonder whether Ministers appreciate the problems of small farmers in particular as new charges are introduced in the dairy sector, in plant and seed exports and in the beef sector for artificial insemination. Obviously the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) has at heart the interest of rural communities and industries, and I am pleased to support the Third Reading.

9.42 am

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I wish to associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Members for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) and for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields), who spoke about the problems facing small farmers. The Bill will benefit the agriculture industry and the Opposition welcome it. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on introducing the Bill, hope that it passes all its stages this morning, and wish it well on its way through the other place.

9.43 am

The Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Agiculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) on introducing this more than useful measure which is a precursor of things to come.

In reply to the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields), may I say that the Government grant to the ATB this year is nearly £8 million. The ATB is the only industrial training organisation to be so funded; all others operate on a direct levy system, involving the respective industries. Therefore, in the circumstances our agriculture is already doing rather well. As diversification grows there may be room to move into other areas, but in the present circumstances agriculture is doing well.

The amount of money in the pot to be shared out is limited and it has been decided to put the money for diversification towards capital costs. If more had been made available for training, less would have been left for capital costs. There is no money resolution to the Bill, and that was fully explained in Committee.

Grants for tourism and craft industries were introduced in the Agriculture Improvement Scheme and there will be socio-economic advice and aid from special advisers. Our new package of diversifications which goes much further will provide capital grants on a wide range of diversification activities, both in the less favoured areas and in the lowlands, such as Ryedale. Details are still to be settled and will be the subject of consultations with industry and other parties. Possible areas of discussion are value-added food processing, the processing of other agricultural products such as wood and skins, amenity and recreation grants, pony trekking and more extensive tourism and craft grants. There will also be grants for marketing the products of diversified farm businesses.

It may be said that diversification only scratches the surface, but the Department and I believe that it is a solid beginning. I fully accept the hon. Lady's point that we must do all we can to look after our small farmers because, whatever else goes, the land remains. The land runs from the tip of Cornwall to the north of Scotland and only farmers, often small farmers, can look after it properly. We cannot expect local government officers or park keepers to do that, although our national parks are a great glory. The land will not evolve or remain beautiful unless we rely on farmers to look after it. That is why we are keen that farm diversification should not be seen as a way of taking people off the land into other areas, but rather as a way of keeping farms going and families involved in other activities.

At first sight it may seem offensive to a lady, instead of feeding the calves, to do bed and breakfast on her beautiful farm for three or four couples who have come to see the view. She may have found the calves better company. But at the end of the day bed and breakfast may be her better source of income. Therefore, we must encourage diversification in all its forms. It can play an important role in sustaining farm incomes through the difficult times ahead for the farming industry.

Diversification includes any commercial activity carried out by farmers, other than the production of a staple crop and livestock husbandry. It may involve processing farm products so that they can be sold more profitably, providing facilities for recreation or attracting visitors to stay on the farm. Such diversification benefits farmers, taxpayers and consumers.

First, diversification is obviously beneficial to farmers who can maintain or increase their income and diversify the source from which it comes, without at the same time adding to the production of crops, for which there is no immediate market and which must be put into costly storage. None of us wants to encourage more huge food mountains. They are an embarrassment to the civilised world because they cost money and we have not found efficient, sensible ways of sending them to the Third world. Secondly, taxpayers benefit as a result of lower common agricultural policy costs. Thirdly, diversification benefits anyone and everyone who enjoys or could enjoy the countryside as a place of beauty, interest or leisure and good quality fresh farmhouse foods.

A further benefit is the role of diversification in exploiting the various skills and experience of farm family members and using them to develop the farm business to the benefit of the family as a whole. Too often farmers find themselves failing to utilise to the full their assets of buildings, land and people. Diversification is a way of getting the maximum return from all those, including farm personnel. It can, for example, provide a focus for the catering skills of the farm wife or for the business acumen of a son or daughter. In that way diversification can contribute to the strength of the farm family and provide a wide range of opportunities for skilled farm labourers.

I recognise that it is not always easy for a farmer to embark on a diversification project, particularly when a lot of investment is involved. It was with that in mind that in 1985 the Government introduced craft and tourism grants in less favoured areas. They covered 25 per cent. of total expenditure up to £24,000. Some imaginative proposals have already been put forward for such grants.

Last year, the Government took the further step of introducing the Agriculture Act 1986. Section 22 of that Act gives power to extend the scope of existing capital grants to a wider range of ancillary farm-based businesses. On 9 February, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced his intention to introduce new grants in the near future. In consultation with the industry and other interested parties, we are now considering the details of the new schemes. The other interested parties will include the agricultural training board. In addition to capital grants, the schemes will include grants for marketing — that is for market research and feasibility studies—so that farmers can be sure of an outlet for the products of their diversified businesses.

One cannot over-emphasise the need for marketing. The need for marketing of British farm products is continuing. Grants, either capital or marketing, are only part of the story. Advice to farmers about the

opportunities available to them to diversify from their existing base can often prove to be just as valuable as financial assistance from the Government.

Through our network of regional socio-economic advisers — that name sounds a bit grim to me — and Agricultural Development and Advisory Service advisers the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is able to advise farmers on how they might best develop what may be under-used farm resources, such as buildings, land and people, and particularly the varied skills of their families. ADAS continues to provide free of charge general advice on diversification. It also refers farmers to other agencies such as the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas—COSIRA—which does a good job in my constituency. It is skilled not only in providing grants but in preparing a business plan for small farmers or business men for the first time. The Countryside Commission also offers grants and advice on diversification. The farm woodlands scheme was introduced to encourage planting on agricultural land as part of a farming enterprise. We are trying to expand not only traditional forestry in regard to conifers but broadleaf trees and various diversification schemes. We have also introduced the environmentally sensitive areas scheme. A great deal of diversification actitivy is going on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North was wise to choose this subject for legislation. As the years go by, his wisdom will be remarked upon by successive generations of farmers. He will be lucky to have such a Bill on the statute book. He has made it clear that the Bill, although modest in appearance, is of great significance, particularly to the rural community and its economy, and to amenity workers, whether they are rural or urban based.

I entirely agreed with my hon. Friend when he spoke of the value and good sense of the amendment to the first main provision of the Bill relating to diversification training which was suggested in Committee by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I thank Opposition Members for the fair wind that they have given the Bill and the help that they gave us in Committee and in the House. I am sure that the farming industry will be pleased to see that this matter has not become a political football and that the whole House supports my hon. Friend's Bill. That people who were formerly within the industry should also have access to the board's training facilities can only be a good thing. It will help those who, for whatever reasons, have ceased to work in agriculture to find new employment opportunities.

The Government attach great importance to the encouragement of farm diversification and the role that it can play on sustaining farm incomes. There are other benefits for farmers taxpayers and consumers. First, it is obviously beneficial to the farmer who is able to maintain or increase his income and diversify the source from which it comes without, at the same time, adding to the production of crops for which there is no immediate market and which must go into costly storage. Secondly, there is a benefit to the taxpayer as a result of lower CAP support costs. Thirdly, diversification benefits anybody who enjoys the countryside. The countryside is not a museum or a park; it is a living, growing, thriving enterprise. People who visit the countryside should realise that they are going to an area of activity and work and should treat it with respect.

Additionally, diversification will allow farmers to utilise to the full farm assets such as buildings, under-utilised machinery, and unworked or unproductive land. Most important of all, it will enhance overall employment prospects in rural comunities. It is essential that additional training is available to encourage such moves.

The other principal provisions of the Bill will allow those who are not employed in agriculture to take advantage of the highly regarded training expertise to which the hon. Member for Ryedale referred. There are a couple of such courses in her part of the world. We all have training expertise in our constituencies, and we are glad of it. Farmers' wives, on a voluntary basis, sustain some of this work of the ATB. In the terms of the Bill, they are amenity skills.

When the board came into existence 21 years ago, its birth coincided with the establishment of a number of other training boards that are associated with various industries. The feeling at the time was that duplication of the work done by various boards should be avoided at all costs. As a result, the scope of the ATB was tied down in considerable legislative detail. My hon. Friend's Bill seeks to remove such constrictions and to allow the board to adopt a more commercial approach in seeking a greater share of its income from those who are willing to purchase its services instead of relying to a substantial extent on grant aid. Although many other industrial training boards are no longer in existence, there is naturally still a desire to avoid unnecessary duplication, and we shall have to try to ensure that there is no duplication between the industrial training board and other bodies such as ADAS. It would be ridiculous if Government bodies were to compete for the same job. Therefore, the Bill contains a necessary safeguard.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North and commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

AIDS (Control) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

PERIODICAL REPORTS ON MATTERS RELATING TO AIDS AND HIV

9.49 am

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 14, after 'other', insert 'relevant'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 5, in page 2, line 7, at end insert—

'(5A) The Schedule to this Act may be modified or amended under subsection (5) above by altering or deleting any of the matters for the time being specified in it or by specifying additional relevant information.'.

No. 6, in line 16, leave out 'and'.

No. 7, line 17, at end insert

'and "relevant information" means information relating to, or to any matter connected with, AIDS or HIV.'.

No. 8, in clause 4, page 2, line 29, at end insert—

'(1A) In this Act "AIDS" means "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" and "HIV" means "Human Immunodeficiency Virus."'.

No. 10, in, Title, line 2, at end insert 'and Human Immunodeficiency Virus.'.

Mr. Strang: Amendments Nos. 1, 5, 6 and 7 are technical. The Secretary of State is empowered by the Act to give directions and make orders changing the information that is to be contained in the reports. The amendments ensure that only relevant information can be required, "relevant" being defined as

"relating to, or to any matter connected with, AIDS or HIV."

10 am

It has been suggested that amendment No. 5 could be used radically to alter the nature of future legislation. That is not so. I am grateful to the British Medical Association for its advice in this context. I shall quote from what I believe to be a helpful letter that is based on the advice of the BMA's legal department and signed by its parliamentary officer, Sue Marks. She points out that the Secretary of State can introduce regulations to make AIDS a notifiable disease. The Secretary of State already has these powers under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984, which is a consolidation Act that brings together various earlier enactments.

I understand that the Government's position remains, as it has always been, that they have no intention of making it a notifiable disease. The letter says:

"The regulations were introduced in 1985 which made provision for certain sections of the 1984 Act to apply to AIDS — for example, removal to hospital, attention in hospital, compulsory medical examination, isolation of the body, etc. Further regulations could therefore at any time apply under various sections of the 1984 Act to AIDS."

Amendment No. 8 moves the definition of AIDS and HIV from paragraph 9 of the schedule to a new subsection in clause 4. We have deliberately not included in the Bill a scientific definition of HIV or AIDS. Scientists are still learning about the nature of the virus and about the condition described as AIDS. Any current definition could be outdated by further research. We refer to HIV and AIDS as they are understood at present.

Amendment No. 10 makes it explicit that the Bill covers the human immunodeficiency virus, of which AIDS is but one manifestation. This is an important scientific point. Hon. Members know that the main effect of HIV on the health of an individual is that it attacks the immune system, with the result that after a period of years the individual dies from a disease such as pneumonia. HIV can also cause a form of cancer — again, it is believed, through the immune system. The virus also causes dementia. It is believed that that is not caused by an attack on the immune system, but that there is a direct attack by the virus on the central nervous system. Therefore, the Bill does not cover just AIDS. It recognises that HIV infection can cause conditions other than AIDS.

The amendments improve the Bill significantly, and I commend them to the House.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I have read the Standing Committee proceedings, which seem to have been very good natured and to have led to a great deal of all-party agreement. However, amendment No. 5 says:

"The Schedule to this Act may be modified or amended under subsection (5) above by altering or deleting any of the matters for the time being specified in it or by specifying additional relevant information."

Following an article in today's edition of *The Times*, there seems to be a need to stress the difference between the incidence of HIV and AIDS. In his important article, Mr. Paul Vallely says:

"among the soldiers"

these are the soldiers of the Zambian army—

"the rate is virtually 100 per cent."

He is referring to the incidence of HIV. Then he says:

"Interestingly, however, fewer seem actually to die from the disease here than we would expect. Perhaps the strain is slightly different. Perhaps the local population have had it for years and have developed partial immunity."

If information is to be published, as the schedule requires, it is crucially important to make the distinction between the incidence of HIV and AIDS casualties. A number of Opposition Members made this point during the Standing Committee proceedings. In the light of that article, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to draw a distinction between the two sets of statistics, because the public assume that they are the same. However, the work in Zambia makes it clear that there may be an important difference.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I support the amendments. However, subject to the safeguards that are included in the Bill, amendment No. 5 provides for a wide variety of options that enable the Miniser to amend the schedule. There is concern about giving a potentially open-ended power to Ministers, particularly in relation to confidential information. Medical information is a good example of that.

What developments does the Minister think might lead him to avail himself of these open-ended powers? The phrase "additional relevant information" is included, and we understand what that means, but what additional relevant information would lead the Minister to introduce a statutory instrument? The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) dealt with the incidence of the disease and its effects. We need to hold a balance between informing the public and not creating undue alarm or undue publicity, or breaches of confidentiality concerning pople who are either AIDS carriers or AIDS victims.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): May I explain to the House the purpose of this group of amendments. They have the unusual, and in this case meritorious, characteristic of being amendments that stand in the names of both an Opposition Back Bencher and a Government Minister. That is a happy sign of all-party unanimity. *[Interruption.]* I hear a slight murmuring behind me from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). I realise that all-party unanimity may not extend to all Members of all parties. I suspect that that applies to my hon. Friend.

Amendments Nos. 1, 5, 6 and 7 are technical. They flow from the amendment of the long title to include HIV. That almost immediately picks up the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). Their objective is to ensure that the Secretary of State can give directions and make orders to amend the schedule to require health authorities and boards to provide information, not just about full-blown AIDS, but about HIV and HIV-related conditions.

Amendment No. 8 moves the definition of AIDS and HIV from the previous paragraph 9 of the schedule to a new subsection of clause 4. The reason for this is that in the previous version of the Bill AIDS and HIV were mentioned only in the schedule, and that is the correct place for this definition. AIDS and HIV are now referred to in clause 1(8) and it is therefore necessary to provide a definition in the body of the Bill.

Amendment No. 10 links the purpose of several of these amendments, amends the long title of the Bill and makes explicit that the scope of the Bill covers human immunodeficiency virus, of which AIDS is only one manefestation. This is directly relevant to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton.

Although the short title of the Bill is the AIDS (Control) Bill, it was always intended to cover not only full-blown clinical AIDS but other conditions that result from infection from the human immunodeficiency virus. HIV is the causative factor, and not everyone who becomes infected with it is known to develop full-blown AIDS. The provisions of the Bill clearly cover HIV as well as AIDS, and this change to the long title is designed to make the scope of the Bill absolutely plain.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): My hon. Friend might consider at a later stage changing the title further in another place. As he knows, I am a strong supporter of the Bill, but it is not really an AIDS control Bill. It is an AIDS information Bill.

Mr. Newton: I do not want to engage in semantic quibbling with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James). The underlying purpose of the Bill is to assist in the control of the spread of clinical AIDS and of the virus which causes it, by requiring reports from health authorities and by publishing information about what health authorities are doing. While I accept that the superficial purpose of the Bill is simply to bring about the publication of reports on various items, its underlying purpose is to assist in the control of the spread of this terrible disease. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that the title reflects that underlying purpose.

I was asked about amendment No. 5 and also about one or two rather broader issues. I shall start by replying to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton. I hope he will feel that I have already answered them in a sense. In public discussion of this matter there is still a certain amount of confusion, if only because AIDS is such an easy acronym to use in newspaper headlines and in the ordinary course of public discussion.

It is basic to public understanding of what is happening to say that even now relatively few people have died from AIDS or have full-blown clinical AIDS. The number of such people known to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre is between 700 and 800. This is a very small part of the problem, in the sense that although we have no firm knowledge of how many people in Britain are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus, our best estimates are about 30,000 to 40,000. We have acknowledged that the figure could be lower or higher than that, and some people have said that the figure is higher.

The number of people with HIV is considerably higher than those who have AIDS. There are many uncertainties, including information about the number of those now infected with the virus—which certainly runs into tens of thousands — who will develop full-blown clinical AIDS, thereby adding to the number of between 700 and 800 who are currently known to have or to have had full-blown AIDS. The estimate given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is the best available to us at the moment and shows that the number of AIDS cases will rise to about 4,000 by the end of 1989. However, that prediction is subject to some degree of uncertainty. I accept the distinction that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton draws between AIDS cases and those infected with the virus. Part of the purpose of the amendments is to make that clearer in the Bill and, therefore, in the reports that flow from the Bill.

10.15 am

Sir George Young: Will the statistics published under this part of the Bill show whether partial immunity to AIDS is being developed? By looking at the percentage of notifiable HIV cases that have turned into AIDS, will they show whether the human body is capable of producing its own immunity to the strain?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that the statistics required by the Bill will in themselves show that. The general exercise of seeking to improve our statistical knowledge of AIDS will assist in improving our clinical knowledge of AIDS and the virus. As I am sure my hon. Friend knows, this virus has been known in Britain for significantly less than 10 years. It is only three or four years since the organism was identified, and although our knowledge about it is probably greater already than at this stage of any other disease in history, because our knowledge has grown rapidly, in a sense we are still at a relatively early stage in learning about this organism and its effect on people.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): There is an important point here, because statistical knowledge helps clinical knowledge. We shall come to that later in the schedule. There have been certain changes in blood tests, which I can understand, but the important question is how statistically significant the results will be as a consequence of the Bill.

Mr. Newton: Clearly, any additional information about the pattern in people who are infected and the extent to which they do or do not progress to full-blown clinical AIDS will assist our clinical and our epidemiological

[Mr. Newton]

knowledge about the course of this virus. I must be frank and say that it is unlikely that the information that will be published in the form and shape required by the Bill relating to areas of district health authorities will be as significant in adding to that knowledge as the information collated nationally through the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.

One of the problems that we shall come to when discussing one of the later amendments about the publication of information about those infected with HIV, as distinct from those with full-blown clinical AIDS, is that of knowing whether the information available to a district health authority relates to the people in its area or to people from other areas. There is little doubt that in this case, as with other sexually transmitted diseases, many people prefer not to go either for assessment or for treatment to places in their own areas but to go to places, where, to put it bluntly, they think that they will not be known.

There is little doubt that that is one of the explanations for the fact that the overwhelming majority of clinical AIDS cases at the moment are in only three out of the 14 health regions in England. They are almost all in the North-West, North East and South East Thames regions. The largest numbers are in the North East and North West Thames regional health authority areas. In the Thames regions the problem is heavily concentrated in a number of well-known inner London hospitals. No doubt that partly reflects people's preference for being treated in more anonymous circumstances than would be possible if they were the only cases in a local district hospital.

Information collected and published on a district basis in the way that we are suggesting is unlikely to add as significantly to our broad knowledge, in the way that some hon. Members have suggested, as the information that is collected and analysed through the Colindale Communcable Disease Surveillance Centre. Much of the local information may, in the end, have to be drawn from that.

I hope that that goes some way towards satisfying the proper thirst for knowledge of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton. I hope also to have satisfied the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), whose other point will be dealt with when we come to a later amendment.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked about the purpose of amendment No. 5. Amendment No. 9 leaves out paragraph 3 of the original schedule, and if the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) had not already done so, I should have explained to the House that that paragraph in the schedule, as it emerged from Committee, was designed to impose a requirement to publish certain information about the number of people in an area who were thought to be suffering from HIV, but it has proved to be defective. We therefore propose to leave it out at this stage, on the basis of a firm undertaking that we wish to have in the schedule a requirement to publish the best available information about HIV sufferers.

Bluntly, frankly and without any sense of shame, I can tell the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that what has happened to the proposed requirements to publish information on HIV-positives is that we were not able to draft what we regard as an adequate provision in time to put it in the schedule. That explains our reasons for having the powers in amendment No. 5 — about which the hon. Gentleman was concerned — which enable us to add to or amend the schedule. There is nothing sinister in that. The problem has been the speed with which we have worked on the Bill. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government have been co-operating actively with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East since Second Rading, which was not long ago, and through the Committee stage, and we have not been able to solve all the problems involved in determining exactly what information we can sensibly require to be published.

Our reason for amending the schedule is to cope, in the short term, with the difficulty relating to HIV-positives and, in the long term, to make sure that we are not, by the rapid passage of primary legislation locked into something which, in the end, will turn out to be nonsensical in practice. We want room to manoeuvre by means of secondary legislation, rather than have to return to all the paraphernalia of passing another Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am grateful for the Minister's confirmation, and I accept his good faith. He will understand that the only concern of people outside the system is that the Minister will have power to ask for information about an individual or his condition. It would be helpful for the record to hear the Minister deny that, to complement what he has said about the reason for needing the power to keep up with the process of the disease.

Mr. Newton: I can readily give that assurance. I would need to take advice before giving a categorical assurance that the provision could not conceivably be used to do what the hon. Gentleman suggests. I doubt whether the Bill could legally be used in that way, but I can give the hon. Gentleman a categorical assurance that the Government would not use the powers to obtain information about an individual. Indeed, one of our main concerns has been to ensure that the Bill and the reports from district health authorities and the health boards of Scotland cannot conceivably risk breaking confidentiality. That has been the subject of extended discussion between the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East and me. We were determined not to have a Bill that created the risk of breaching an individual's confidentiality, or which could be perceived by an individual as creating such a risk. I can give the hon. Gentleman the basic assurance that he wants.

I now come to another, not dissimilar, issue—that of notifiability. Although compulsory notifiability is a separate issue from those contained in the Bill, I understand that it has been raised by Opposition Members, so I shall comment on it. The House is well aware that the Government's position is that there is no merit or benefit in making AIDS a notifiable disease at present, and we have no plans to do so. A system of voluntary reporting of cases on a confidential basis to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre and its equivalent unit in Scotland has been in operation since 1982. A statutory system might produce less accurate reporting, because patients are reluctant to come forward for testing and doctors are reluctant to give a firm diagnosis because of their fears, justified or otherwise, of loss of confidentiality.

The risks are obvious. The historical argument against making sexually transmitted diseases notifiable is that

such action drives them underground. I understand that no sexually transmitted disease is notifiable in the United Kingdom, for that reason. The other problem with AIDS is the long time lag between exposure to the virus and the development of the symptoms. It would therefore be extremely difficult, or indeed impossible, to trace former contacts, which is one of the usual reasons for making a disease notifiable.

Contacts are traced and can then be helped, but that would be impossible in many cases in which people with active sex lives may have picked up the virus as long ago as five, six or seven years. Therefore, one of the practical arguments for the compulsory notification does not exist in this case.

In any case, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East said, the Government already have clear-cut powers to make diseases notifiable if they wish to do so. I have said that that is not our intention with AIDS, and I can give the House a categorical assurance that the powers in the Bill will not be used to bring that about. If it is thought in the future that it would be a good idea to make AIDS notifiable, the powers to do so already exist in a different form.

I hope that I have relieved the anxieties that have been expressed in the debate about these innocuous amendments. I also hope that I have been of assistance to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton, and that I have cleared up any lingering doubts or worries in the minds of Opposition Members.

10.30 am

Mr. Strang: I agree with the Minister for Health about the points which he covered and I am grateful for the speech of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young).

My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) raised a point that related purely to the statistical information required. My information is that other clauses will have a bigger impact in controlling the disease. Nevertheless, the statistical data will be important, partly for the reason at which the Minister hinted. We shall eventually use the data from the Public Health Laboratory Service and from the Communicable Disease Surviellance Centre. It is important to recognise that, once the statistics are properly published annually — unfortunately, this problem will be with us until the end of the century— we shall have a valuable measurement in the health board areas of Scotland and in the district health authority areas in England and Wales.

Dr. Marek: I agree with my hon. Friend, but the question is: are the statistics significant? If we are to collect them, we should ensure that we attach as much significance to them as possible, subject to all the constraints mentioned by the Minister. That is an important point, although I agree with my hon. Friend that other provisions in the Bill are more important.

Mr. Strang: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is no problem with the AIDS statistics. I think that my hon. Friend is referring particularly to the HIV statistics. It is important that the footnotes in the documentation should make absolutely clear the testing circumstances of the results. I do not doubt that we shall be able to produce a new paragraph in the schedule which will ensure that the data published on HIV infection on a regional and district basis are scientifically valuable.

The hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) has taken an interest in the Bill and supports it. The Bill is about controlling AIDS. As hon. Members said on Second Reading, there is no doubt that, when the legislation is enacted, it will contribute significantly over the years to restricting the rate of spread of HIV, thus saving lives. Although I understand the view of the hon. Member for Cambridge, I urge him not to press his point about changing the Bill's title to the extent of perhaps threatening the prospects of enactment within the next couple of months. All the hon. Members who spoke on Second Reading were anxious that the Bill should be enacted promptly. I believe that the Minister and I have responded positively to the views expressed then.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Strang: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 1, line 18, after 'Authority', insert 'District Health Authority'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 3, in page 1, line 19, after 'Board', insert

'by which they are made and'.

No. 4, in page 1, line 21, leave out from 'State' to end of line 23.

Mr. Strang: The amendments are a tidy way of placing a clear duty to publish on each authority in England and Wales and each board in Scotland producing a report and to require them to collect and collate such reports. The words referring to Wales have been left in the Bill because, strictly speaking, Wales does not have a regional health authority, so there would not be a body responsible for collating the reports.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I should like to seek a little truth from the Minister or from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on amendment No. 4. I understand that the purpose is to ensure that reports are published. I am happy to support that end. Should one infer that, if the public want those reports, they will be able to obtain them? Obviously Members of Parliament receive the reports, but they may not be available to the public. We are deleting the words that expressly relate to that. I hope that that does not mean that the public will not be able to obtain the reports, whatever the reasonable demand is.

Mr. Newton: The amendments deal with the fact that under the previous drafting of the Bill the only requirement was to make reports available. There was the curious anomaly that the Bill, whose primary purpose was to bring about the publication of reports, contained no requirement that they should be published, but required only that they should be made available. I think, subject to any advice that my lawyers might care to give me, that "publishing" subsumes "making available". I assure the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that our intention in this, as in all senses, is entirely honourable.

The effect of the amendments is to provide that all the reports will be published, including those made by district health authorities. The note which the Department has kindly provided says that in Committee I said that we accepted the need to amend this clause to provide for the publication of district reports rather than merely make

[Mr. Newton]

them available. We are obviously sure that this is the right course, and that is what the amendment does. The hon. Gentleman need not, therefore, worry.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 1, line 19 after 'Board', insert—

'by which they are made and'.

No. 4, in page 1, line 21, leave out from 'State' to end of line 23.

No. 5, in page 2, line 7, at end insert—

'(5A) The Schedule to this Act may be modified or amended under subsection (5) above by altering or deleting any of the matters for the time being specified in it or by specifying additional relevant information.'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 16, leave out 'and'.

No. 7, in page 2, line 17, at end insert—

'and "relevant information" means information relating to, or to any matter connected with, AIDS or HIV.'. — *[Mr. Strang.]*

Clause 4

SHORT TITLE AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 2, line 29, at end insert—

'(1A) In this Act "AIDS" means Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" and "HIV" means "Human Immunodeficiency Virus.".'.—*[Mr. Strang.]*

Schedule

CONTENTS OF REPORTS

Mr. Strang: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 3, leave out lines 3 to 31 and insert—

'1. The number of persons known to the Authority or Board to be persons with AIDS at the end of the period to which the report relates ("the reporting period") having been diagnosed as such—

(a) in that period; and

(b) up to the end of that period,

by facilities or services provided by the Authority or Board.

2. The number of persons known to the Authority or Board to have been diagnosed as persons with AIDS by such facilities or services in the reporting period or a previous reporting period and to have died—

(a) in the reporting period; and

(b) up to the end of the reporting period.

3. Where the number to be reported under any of the foregoing provisions is between one and nine (inclusive) the report shall state only that the number is less than ten.

4. Particulars of the facilities and services provided by the Authority or Board, or known to it to have been provided in its district or area by others, in the reporting period for testing for, and preventing the spread of, AIDS and HIV and for treating, counselling and caring for persons with AIDS or infected with HIV.

5. The number of persons employed by the Authority or Board wholly or mainly in providing in the reporting period such facilities and services as are mentioned in paragraph 4 above.

6. An estimate of the facilities and services which the Authority or Board will provide in the twelve months following the reporting period for the purposes mentioned in paragraph 4 above.

7. Particulars of action taken by the Authority or Board, or known to it to have been taken in its district or area by others, in the reporting period to educate the public in relation to AIDS and HIV and to provide training for testing for AIDS and HIV and for the treatment, counselling and care of persons with AIDS or infected with HIV.'.

This is an important amendment because, in effect, it replaces the schedule to the Bill as amended in Committee. I stress that the work done by the Department of Health and Social Security, my research assistant and others has improved the schedule. There can be no doubt that the Bill is much better as a consequence of all the effort put into the changes in the schedule.

Paragraphs 1 and 2 of the new schedule relate to the compilation of AIDS statistics for the reporting period and for the cumulative period. A new provision is introduced whereby a report should state the cumulative total of people with AIDS and the number in the reporting period. Paragraph 2 introduces a new provision in that, in addition to the number referred to in paragraph 1, each report should state the cumulative total of people with AIDS who have died by the end of the reporting period and the number of people with AIDS who have died in the reporting period. Clearly it is important for planning purposes to know precisely how many of the people with AIDS are still alive.

Paragraph 3 in the present schedule is to be deleted and new paragraph 3 repeats the provision in old paragraph 4. It provides that, where the number of cases with AIDS is between one and nine, to preserve confidentiality the report should say that the number is below 10. I am happy to endorse the Minister's remarks on Second Reading about the Government's anxiety that there should be no risk to confidentiality. There was a potential risk. We suggested the possibility of banding from nought to 10 and from 10 to 20, but concluded jointly that the best approach was the one in amendment No. 9, by which the number, when it is less than 10, is simply not reported.

The effect of paragraph 4 is to clarify the requirements which were previously contained in paragraph 6 that authorities and boards should report on facilities and services in their area for, inter alia, the testing, treatment, counselling and care for people who have AIDS or are infected with HIV. The amendment clearly differentiates between what is provided by the authority or board and what it knows other bodies have provided locally. It is important to recognise that this is a crucial requirement in the Bill. It will be relatively easy for the AIDS co-ordinator —if that is the person who will have responsibility for this in the district health authority or health board—to report on the work of the health authority or board.

Naturally, we want a comprehensive report—this is what is distinctive about this legislation—which covers the work that has been done by public authorities, local authorities, boards and voluntary organisations. The new paragraph acknowledges that there is a limit to the statutory requirement; we cannot put on a body a statutory requirement which it may not be able to fulfil. The amendment enables us to achieve more effectively what has always been our objective. That will clearly be understood by the district health authorities and officials who will be responsible for producing the reports.

New paragraph 7 amends the wording of former paragraph 8 to draw a clear distinction between action that is taken by a board or authority in regard to education and training as to AIDS and HIV and action that it knows has been taken by other boards locally.

Paragraph 5 clarifies the requirement in previous paragraph 7 to state the number of people who are employed by a health authority or board to work on AIDS or HIV by specifying that the report should cover only

those working wholly or largely in these areas. Hon. Members will understand that this is a common-sense amendment to the paragrph.

Paragraph 6 replaces previous paragraph 5. New paragraph 4 sets out the facilities and services that authorities and boards have provided in the reporting period for tackling the spread of AIDS and HIV. This new paragraph requires them to make an assessment of the facilities and services that they intend to provide in the next year. Again, hon. Members will understand that this change is desirable. It was felt that the original required estimate of services for people with AIDS was too wide. For example, we may find an authority stating that it required three new hospitals and using the report for political propaganda purposes rather than making a realistic assessment of what could reasonably be expected to be provided in the coming year. It is better for an authority to state what it proposes to do. There is nothing to stop it adding what it can or would like to do. the provision is widened to include not just AIDS but HIV and its manifestations.

Paragraph 7 replaces paragraph 8 with alterations along the same lines as new paragraph 4. It refers to training for professionals in sectors ranging from testing and counselling to education.

10.45 am

I should like to say something about the reasons for deleting the paragraph relating to HIV. Earlier in the debate the Minister stated that we have put a lot of thought into this because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has acknowledged, it is important that the requirement in relation to the statistics on HIV produces data which are useful and give some indication of the rate of spread of the infection nationally and regionally, but perhaps more crucially at district level and, in Scotland, at halth board level. At that level we must monitor the rate of spread of the disease. The AIDS cases are the manifestation of that and we know that that manifestation can take five years or more to appear.

It is not the AIDS cases which are important in relation to the epidemiology of the disease; it is our best estimates of the number of HIV carriers. That is why the Minister was right to stress our determination to ensure that, whatever arrangements are agreed and whatever new paragraph is inserted, under the procedure in which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) expressed an interest, they are of value to the Department, Ministers and the community generally in monitoring the rate of spread of the virus and in evaluating over the years — on the basis of that rate of spread nationally and locally — how effective the measures of the Government and the community are in relation to reducing the rate of spread of the virus.

The Minister and I have been pursuing that question in recent weeks and I shall quote the letter that he kindly sent me on 19 March, because it helps to put on record for the benefit of the House not only my interest but the commitment of the Government in this matter. The Minister explained why he felt that we had to withdraw the paragraph in the amended Bill and why he could not at this stage go ahead with a replacement for it. He said:

"Our main concern rests with the operation in practice of paragraph 3 of the Schedule. We understand that the intention is to make authorities aware of the number of those people in their districts who have been identified as infected with HIV, and to give some idea of the total volume of blood tests that have been undertaken. We support those aims fully and would like to see an amendment to the schedule that leads to this information being obtained."

He went on to explain that the Government intend—we hope to achieve this—to secure the amendment in time for the first reports, which will be published in 1988. I hope that it will be possible for the first reporting period to end on 31 March 1988, which is the first reporting year.

I hope that we have reassured the House as to why there is no paragraph in the new schedule on the question of the incidence of HIV and how we shall achieve useful statistics and estimates of HIV infection in different areas. I believe that the House will regard the new schedule as a substantial improvement on the one in the amended Bill.

Sir George Young: Paragraph 2 of the schedule requires reports on

"The number of persons known to the Authority or Board to have been diagnosed . . . and to have died".

On what information will such reports be compiled? Some doctors may not put AIDS as the cause of death. For example, if a publicly respected figure living in a small village dies of AIDS, his GP may not wish to state that fact on the death certificate. Bearing in mind the way in which AIDS is most commonly contracted, the doctor may seek to save the sensitivities of the family and friends by putting another disease on the death certificate. The dead man may be known to the authority or Board to have been an AIDS sufferer, but will that death be included in the statistics?

I recall the recent death of Liberace. Up to the moment of his death, his relatives, advisers and friends insisted that he did not have AIDS. I stand to be corrected, but I think that the coroner put AIDS on the death certificate and some litigation resulted.

I understand that AIDS involves, as its name implies, an immune deficiency and reduces the body's capacity to resist other diseases. Those who suffer from AIDS may die of something else. Will the other disease appear on the death certificate? If we are to publish information about deaths, we are entitled to know how the raw data are compiled and how we can overcome the social problems when the correct cause of death is not recorded on a death certificate.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): I agree wholeheartedly with what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but it would not be lost on anyone examining the statistics that if there were a significant increase in, for example, Kaposi's Sarcoma or in the number of deaths from bronchial pneumonia or other related diseases, we should be dealing not with a relatively simple infection but with something much more sinister. However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we need some way to show clearly and concisely what is happening.

Sir George Young: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As a qualified doctor, he has covered the issue in a much more professional way than I could. There are other ways of registering the deaths of AIDS sufferers than merely writing AIDS on the death certificate. Perhaps we can detect the incidence of AIDS by looking at the causes of other deaths, but, under the proposed new schedule, they would not appear as deaths from AIDS.

I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department is present, because he has ministerial responsibility for coroners, who are in charge of death certificates. Perhaps they will have

[Sir George Young]

to ensure that the Home Office complies with the spirit of the Bill if it gives guidance on how death certificates should be completed when someone dies of AIDS.

The schedule requires certain information to be provided:

"The number of persons employed . . . wholly or mainly in providing . . . such facilities and services . . . An estimate of the facilities and services which the Authority or Board will provide".

However, no estimate is required of the costs involved. Is that because this is a private Member's Bill and, therefore, it is not in order to mention money, or is there another reason? I know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health has made substantial resources available through the National Health Service to meet the growing problem of AIDS. It seemed to me that it would be appropriate for the Government to show how the money was being spent. Will my hon. Friend or the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) explain why costs incurred by the authority or board are not included in the schedule?

Dr. M. S. Miller: I apologise for the fact that, due to circumstances beyond my control, I arrived after the debate had started.

We are dealing with a tremendously serious outbreak which is worse than anything that we have known in our lifetime and is perhaps worse than anything that has ever been known; even the black death might not be comparable.

The outbreak has taken us unawares. I do not blame anyone for that, but we certainly have to monitor the situation much more closely and regularly than we should have to monitor an outbreak of smallpox or diphtheria.

I hope that the Minister will tell us what action he intends to take to ensure that information is kept up to date—not on an annual basis, but over much shorter periods. Those who will be deeply involved in the treatment of patients, whether it be palliative treatment or any other sort, and those responsible for providing the necessary funds—the cost will balloon enormously—must be able to call on up-to-date information.

I do not know whether such a provision needs to be put into the Bill. Certainly, no responsible Government could neglect the need for up-to-date information and I hope that the Minister will assure us that those who are involved in treating AIDS and in providing funds will have information about what has been happening in the previous month or so.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): It is always difficult to interrupt a comfortable unanimity on any subject, however important it may be, but occasionally it falls to an hon. Member to fulfil that role.

Some people in politics, perhaps the more cynical, say that if something has unanimous support there must be something wrong with it. I am not sure that I subscribe wholly to that view, but I have occasionally shared it.

My fears are made specific by the proposed new schedule. We are dealing with the fine balanace that must be struck between the provision of information, which may be essential to the end that everyone wants to achieve, and the possible spreading of alarm. I fear that there is a danger that we may come closer than we should like to spreading alarm.

A report will have to be prepared on the number of AIDS sufferers in a health authority area. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) mentioned the problem that could be caused in small communities. Even if an authority avoided the possibility of individuals being identified and merely said that there were fewer than 10 AIDS sufferers in its area, attempts might be made to identify them and alarm might be caused unnecessarily.

11 am

Some thought must be given to whether we are striking the correct balance between the provision of information for the most laudable purposes and the possible causing of alarm in small communities where none existed before.

I should like to know how far my hon. Friend thinks it will be possible to identify accurately and meaningfully the facilities and services which are allocated to the purpose contained in the Bill. Will they not overlap considerably with other purposes and facilities already in existence? I have some doubts about the meaningfulness of the amendment, particularly paragraph 5, which refers to

"The number of persons employed by the Authority or Board".

I should have thought that the facilities would be shared to a large extent, or that action would be taken as far as possible within existing resources. I hope that we are not attempting to impart a spurious accuracy to something that will be very difficult to identify.

I am, however, much more concerned about paragraph 6, which has been touched on already. I am worried about it, and I wonder whether my right hon. Friend is as well. I fear that we are about to go down a rather dangerous road. If we require

"An estimate of the facilities and services which the Authority or Board will provide",

we shall open up the distinct possibility — as was admitted during the moving of the amendment — of pressure being put on the Government of the day, regardless of party. In an effort to extract more resources from the system, individual boards and authorities may exaggerate the problem, or perhaps say only what they believe is essential to provide the facilities required under the Bill. How will the Government respond to such pressure? If we applied the principle right across the National Health Service, I suspect that any Government would find themselves in the uncomfortable, if not intolerable, position of being told by each board, region and authority, "This is essential: the statute requires it."

We are discussing AIDS now, but such a development could spread to other cases in which a condition requires treatment, or information needs to be provided. The Government of the day would be forced to say whether they could make such provision or, if they could not, why they could not. I am worried that the paragraph could create a precedent and how we will respond.

That leads me to a wider point touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton. We see no mention of the costs of the exercise. We know that the facilities are being generously provided already, but we cannot measure the commitment that we are being asked to make. The principle is important. Many people have expressed concern, which I should like to voice today, that we may be committing potentially enormous resources to a largely — although not entirely — self-inflicted condition. It is difficult to square that with the lack of similar provision and concentration of resources on behalf of those who suffer from conditions that they have not brought upon themselves.

My hon. Friend knows that I am at issue with him on the subject of needles. I acknowledge that we have at last given needles to diabetics, but that was done only because of AIDS. How can we justify the Bill which, with the best possible motives, devotes considerable resources—we do know how much — to AIDS, to disabled and handicapped people who may be suffering from, say, kidney disease, which is not self-inflicted but is the result of a natural catastrophe? They have a very good claim to more resources, but there is no such Bill for them, to my knowledge. There is a good deal of unease in the community, and I, too, am uneasy about the degree to which we are concentrating on AIDS in the amendment.

Paragraph 7 refers to

"the reporting period to educate the public".

Here again, there is a difficulty. The term "education" always carries the best possible connotations. It sounds good; everyone approves of education. In the present context, however, the meaning of the word is not beyond controversy. The excellent efforts of the Government to education the public, as they see it, have made many people feel anxious that what to one man is education may spread alarm, panic and unnecessary concern to others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying quite wide of the amendment; his speech would have been more appropriate on Second Reading. The amendment deals with reporting, not with the merits or otherwise of what is to be reported.

Mr. Forth: I thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it was in order to explore the meaning of the word "educate" in paragraph 7. However, as always, I shall be guided by you. I hope that I have put my point across.

Although I well understand the concern that has given rise to the Bill, and although I appreciate the unanimity referred to earlier by my hon. Friend, I have considerable reservations about it. I am worried about what may lie behind the schedule, about what it requires in terms of cost and about the wider implications for National Health Service resourcing. It may be felt desirable in the future —perhaps, indeed, by me—to use the Bill as a precedent when dealing with other conditions that are not, as this is, largely self-inflicted.

We shall not be voting on the amendment today, but, if we were, I should abstain or even vote against it. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure me.

Dr. Marek: I shall be brief. I think that there is general unanimity in the House, although not on every aspect of the problem, but, I was very sorry to hear the speech made by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). The hon. Gentleman was arguing for ignorance. He said that enormous resources could be spent on AIDS. Despite the general unanimity, that is one of the points at issue: the Opposition feel that the Government should be putting more emphasis on the problem, and committing more resources to it. At present, those resources are not enormous.

I was also sorry to hear the hon. Gentleman say that resources were being committed to a condition that people had brought upon themselves. That is a shameful statement. The hon. Gentleman should be thoroughly ashamed of himself, but, in his ignorance, he probably will not be, which makes me even sadder.

Mr. Forth: But is it true?

Dr. Marek: Of course it is not true. The number of HIV cases in this country has been estimated at 20,000, 30,000 or 40,000, but I fear that the eventual figure will be considerably higher. All the estimates made so far have been at the bottom of the band. I do not wish to spread alarm, and I do not think that I am doing so, but I feel that the public should know the facts, rather than be kept in ignorance, as the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire recommends.

It is the Government's duty to inform the public, unless they have extremely good reasons not to do so — perhaps relating to national security, but that does not arise here. The public are not idiots. If they are aware of the facts, they can consider them and take appropriate action. Leaving the public in ignorance will not help. That is why the Opposition fully support the Bill.

Dr. M. S. Miller: AIDS has been visited upon us relatively recently, so, even with scientific knowledge, no one should jump to conclusions about how it is spread. Many aspects of the disease are still in their infancy. We might discover a different pattern in the coming months or years. It is wrong to jump to conclusions about how it is spread or to say that it is self-imposed.

It took a long time to discover that lung cancer was caused by smoking cigarettes. For many years we did not think that there was any relationship between the two. It might be some time before we know the implications of how this disease is spread.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend makes the point better than I do. Only by knowledge shall we find out how the disease is spread, how it is caused and what can be done to cure it.

I shall say nothing more about the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire, because his words speak for themselves. The disease exists in the heterosexual community. It is not something that people have brought upon themselves, as the hon. Gentleman said. It concerns all of us. I am sure that the hon. Member will find no support for his words anywhere in the House.

I do not think that there will be any identification problems if the Bill is passed. As the Minister said, hon. Members on both sides of the House are worried about that possibility. We do not want individuals to be identified.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) intends to continue to consider how the statistics for AIDS and HIV should be collected. Eventually I am sure that we shall come up with a solution.

I am happy to support the amendment in the hope that perhaps in another place certain matters might be put right.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I support the amendment. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) and the Minister for trying to achieve the best criteria for reporting. In Committee I moved an amendment dealing with the breakdown figures. I accept the need for the figures not to be broken down according to district or region because of identification problems.

I hope that when the Minister does his national compilations he will break down the figures by age. That will be particularly useful because it might show whether the campaign is getting through better in some places than in others. It is important to know nationally the incidence

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of people who have contracted the virus and the disease. That will enable the Government to direct their campaign more efficiently and to provide more widespread information about what we all need to do to try to reverse the spread of the disease.

11.15 am

Mr. Rhodes James: I am worried about paragraph 3 of the schedule. I understand the confidentiality problem, about which we are all concerned, but the value of the data that will result from the Bill will be diminished if a report might state

"only that the number is less than ten."

Statistically there is an enormous difference between five, three and nine. The value of the schedule might be compromised by that paragraph. That is not a criticism of the schedule as a whole, because it is a great improvement on the original, but it could nullify the total value of the exercise and the statistics.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I apologise for being out of the Chamber, but I went to get the latest AIDS figures, published by the DHSS, which obviously are important to the schedule.

Confidentiality has been mentioned. The region of the reporting doctor might not be the same as that of the patient. That would certainly ensure confidentiality. A patient might receive treatment in a region other than that from which he was first reported or he might be known to a region which has not yet reported.

I am a little worried that certain areas will be known as AIDS-free areas and others as AIDS-covered areas. For instance, the North-West Thames area has the largest number of AIDS carriers at 363, yet East Anglia has only five. I am certain that it is necessary for district health authorities to report, according to the schedule, where the AIDS carriers live and where the deaths occur.

We are talking about 731 United Kingdom AIDS cases and 373 deaths. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) said, according to DHSS figures a large number of AIDS cases involve either homosexuals or bisexuals. The total up to the end of February 1987 was 640, of whom 317 have died. I must make one point to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire—28 cases were not homosexual but were haemophiliacs, of whom 22 have lost their lives.

Mr. Forth: I should like to clarify what I said, in view of the remarks by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). I was very careful to say that the disease was largely self-inflicted. If the hon. Gentleman checks *Hansard*, he will discover that I used that phrase several times. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) now makes clear the basis for my remarks. I acknowledge that some people do not come into that category, but the great bulk do. That is the difference that I was describing in relation to people with handicaps and diseases of other kinds in which they have played no part whatsoever.

Mr. Bruinvels: I have no doubt that that clarifies my hon. Friend's position.

In a written question yesterday I asked about the children of HIV mothers. I am not sure how figures for them can be incorporated, but I hope that they will be. There have been seven cases so far, and four have died. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), I think that the death certificate in such cases should be clear. I am aware that such cases cause a scare in the neighbourhood and might perhaps undermine the respectability of the person concerned. Anyone — Liberace is a case in point—who dies of AIDS should have the sympathy of the whole House. Such people should be treated not as statistics but as human beings in desperate circumstances who need care and understanding in the last days of their lives.

I welcome the schedule. It is reported that three doctors currently have the AIDS virus. One is in gynaecology and the others are standard physicians. I am not sure how the public will be notified, but I hope that medical men or women who have the AIDS virus will not be allowed to continue in practice. If they did, it could be fatal. People go to hospital to get better. I hope that the Minister will look into that. I know that he is considering what to do about the two nurses who suffer from the AIDS disease. Under the schedule such cases will be recorded as carriers. Those who die from the disease will also be recorded. The Bill is a very caring Bill and it is desperately needed. I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on introducing it.

Mr. Newton: I propose to make my speech on this amendment by commenting, as did the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang), on the schedule paragraph by paragraph. I shall also comment on the points that arise from that process and pick up any other points that may be left over from the notes that I have made on hon. Members' speeches.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East accurately described the purposes of paragraphs 1 and 2 of the new schedule even though, technically, it is amendment No. 9. Those paragraphs help to clarify the intention of the Bill concerning the figures that the reports should contain about the number of people with AIDS. They expand the previous provisions to specify how many of the total number of people with AIDS are living and how many have died. That will be a useful addition to the figures already produced on a national and regional basis by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre and the Scottish unit of that centre.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), with the professional endorsement of the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), raised the question of what the definition of death will be for this purpose, if I may put it that way, and how confident we are that all AIDS cases will be identified as such on death certificates. That is a problem not only with AIDS but with some other diseases and it is not something to which anybody has found a conclusive answer. In some cases there is the obvious risk that the cause of death may be misdiagnosed, but in other cases, for one reason or another — possibly in the interests of attempting to spare people's feelings—some unusual description or possibly circumlocution may be used to describe a cause of death that is thought to be especially unfortunate. There is little doubt that in some cases doctors may be using phrases like "immunodeficiency" to spare people's feelings. However, in such cases it is likely that they will be recognised as AIDS cases by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.

I acknowledge that there is a possible problem for which there is not an off-the-cuff conclusive answer. There

are also problems related to the statistics concerning such cases and we are constantly seeking to rectify and improve the position. On Monday of this week there was a significant, though small, specialised conference in London about predicting the course of the AIDS epidemic. Part of the purpose of the conference was to study precisely the way in which the statistical basis of our knowledge and thus our capacity to predict the spread of the disease, can be improved.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Perhaps the Minister will study the legal position and the definition of the term "syndrome." I cannot remember ever writing on a death certificate that someone had died from a syndrome; he died from some disease, condition or accident. Will the Minister consider whether it is legal to put down AIDS as the cause of death because it is not a disease but a syndrome? He should consider what the definition of the term "syndrome" would imply.

Mr. Newton: I undertake to examine what the hon. Gentleman has said with added vigour in view of his professional background. I accept that there is a difficulty. It has been implicit in remarks made in the House that the actual, immediate cause of death in many AIDS cases is pneumonia. In that case the issue arises as to whether the doctor puts on the death certificate pneumonia arising from or aggravated by the syndrome. I acknowledge that that must be considered. However, I am not in a position today to make further off-the-cuff remarks about that. It is frequently possible to follow up, in confidence, death certificates where the cause of death — for example, pneumonia — is a condition that could be related to AIDS.

If I may attempt to sum up in a sentence what I have been seeking to say, I acknowledge the possible problem that has been highlighted by a particular case in the United States, and I will undertake to consider the comments made today. As with everyone else, we are anxious to ensure, to the fullest possible extent, accurate reporting and accurate information about the prevalence and spread of the disease.

I wish to comment upon something that is not in the schedule, old paragraph 3, rather than paragraph 3 in the amendment. The original paragraph 3 required reports to specify the number of blood samples taken by facilities of the health authority or board for testing for HIV antibodies and the number of such samples which proved positive.

Old paragraph 3 attempted to find some sort of rough proxy of the number of people known to the health authority to be infected with HIV in the authority's area. I am sure that the House will not need reminding — if it did it would have been picked up earlier today — that this is a particularly difficult and complex matter. It is important to ensure that the information given in the reports is not misleading and that it is as complete as possible and that it ties in with the national information system already established by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre and the equivalent unit in Scotland. It is important that that information should not jeopardise and is not seen to jeopardise the confidentiality of individual patients.

When we reconsidered the wording of paragraph 3 of the schedule, as it was amended in Committee, against that background we were not persuaded that it adequately met those four criteria. It does not bring information from the Public Health Laboratory Services, which carries out much of the testing, since those laboratories are independent of the health authorities. It does not distinguish well enough between the number of tests and the number of people being tested—some people may be tested more than once. We consulted our experts including the CDSC in an attempt to come up with an acceptable formulation in time for the Report stage, but, in view of the problems involved, we have not managed to do so. Rather than persevere with what is undoubtedly a defective provision in the Bill, we are proposing to delete it.

None of what I have said, which was emphasised in an extract from my letter which was quoted by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, detracts from the desirability that authorities' reports should contain information about the extent of HIV infection in the local areas. Clearly that information will be most important for planning purposes, and we shall be giving that matter further consideration in consultation with the CDSC together with the health authorities and boards. I repeat the assurance that was explicit in my letter to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East that we intend to use our powers under the Bill to add the requirement that reports must provide information, to the extent that that information is available, about HIV infection. That will occur just as soon as we have devised a workable solution to the problem, and it will certainly be in time for the preparation of the first report.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride raised a query about the reporting period and said — in my judgment, he was correct — that more frequent, up-to-date information would be required for those who are directly engaged in the provision of services. I accept that, but it is a separate problem. The purpose of the reports is to provide a picture of the overall position and the expected provision of services in any given part of the country by a health authority in England over a period. That information will enable the public to make a judgment about what is going on and how the authorities are responding. In one sense, the clinicians and others concerned with the direct treatment of a clinical AIDS case will not need to have a lot of statistics available to them because they will have the people in their wards or those people will be provided with social services. They will know what it happening because they will be able to count the number of people they are treating.

11.30 am

Leaving aside that simplistic point, we are publishing monthly the information that is available to us through the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre about the number of AIDS cases and deaths in particular regions. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) used the press release giving the February figures, which was published earlier this month. We have also said that we shall publish on a quarterly basis the best analysis that we can make of the increase, for example, in the number of HIV positives who have been identified and the assessment that that enables us to make about the spread of the disease. There are too many uncertainties yet for that to be more than an assessment, using the latest available information, but there is nothing in the Bill that suggests that the only requirement for information is in a

[Mr. Newton]

report once a year from every health authority. There are several needs for information, which the Government are actively seeking to meet.

New paragraph 3 repeats the old paragraph 4 and provides that where the number of AIDS cases is between one and nine, to preserve confidentiality, the report would say that the number was below 10. I shall not say anything further about confidentiality at this stage. It has been accepted entirely on both sides of the House that confidentiality should be protected.

Again, I take up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East. Should anyone doubt the potential risk in terms of particular districts, he has only to look at the figures to which my hon. Friend referred, which show that at present there are only two live AIDS cases in the whole of East Anglia—those are the figures notified at the end of last month to the CDSC. There are only two live AIDS cases in the whole of the Oxford region, only two in the whole of the south-west, only three in the whole of the west midlands, and none in Merseyside, although that is simply because all the known people in Merseyside have already died. Therefore, there must be a significant number of health authorities with only one case, if they have any at all. On a narrow district basis, that creates a real risk that confidentiality will be breached. I hope that that will be fully accepted in the House.

Paragraph 4 of the new schedule clarifies the requirement previously in paragraph 6 that authorities and boards should report on facilities and services in their area for, among other things, the testing, treatment, counselling and care of people with AIDS or infected with HIV, while paragraph 7, which was previously paragraph 8, similarly amends the earlier wording to draw a clear distinction between action taken by the authority or board in regard to education and training in respect of AIDS and HIV and action that it knows has been taken by other bodies locally.

As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East said, the amendments are being introduced to clarify and expand what authorities are to include in their reports about local facilities and local action to tackle AIDS and HIV infection. They make it plain that authorities have a two-part obligation—first, to report what they are providing and the actions that they have taken as authorities, and, secondly, to report what they have learnt about what other bodies are doing in their area. We think that in practice the capacity of health authorities to report on what else is happening in their area will be good because in most cases there are already good links between the health authorities and the other agencies involved, but where such links have not yet been formed we hope that the duty to report will encourage those links to be developed or further strengthened in a way that will enable health authorities to provide a thorough picture of local activities.

Paragraph 5, formerly paragraph 7, clarifies the earlier requirement in former paragraph 7 to state the number of people employed by the health authority or board to work on AIDS and HIV by specifying that reports should cover only those working wholly or largely in those areas. That amendment is introduced to make explicit the intention of the provision—my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) raised this point—that only people employed by the health authority or board who work entirely or substantially in those areas should be counted. A large number of NHS staff may at some time perform some duties in relation to AIDS or HIV, but for planning purposes what is needed is to get a firm idea of the number of people whose main responsibilities are in that sphere.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a danger that that could be slightly misleading? An authority might not be able to identify anyone who fulfils the criteria that he has just mentioned, but may have a significant number of people working in that broad area or allocated to it from time to time. If it reported a low or nil figure, that would not give the assurance that my hon. Friend feels the community needs that the authority was working hard on the matter. Is there that danger?

Mr. Newton: In practice, I doubt it. I am sure that health authorities will present such firm data as they think can sensibly be presented within the terms of the schedule. They will say that some people's time is spent to some extent on AIDS, or that as yet they have few cases in their area, so the need for people to be deployed on the clinical treatment of AIDS, as distinct from education and so on, is not there. I do not mean to be too dismissive of my hon. Friend's point. I can see the theoretical point, but in practice I do not believe that there will be a serious problem.

I come to paragraph 6, which replaces the previous paragraph 5. As I said, we have provided that authorities and boards set out the facilities and services that they have provided in the reporting period, including the manpower issue, to which I referred, for tackling the spread of AIDS and HIV. The new paragraph requires them to make an assessment of the facilities and services that they intend to provide in the next year, so the new paragraph represents a significant extension of the information to be provided by health authorities and boards in their reports. It replaces the previous paragraph 5, which required authorities and boards to make some assessment of their future provision for people with AIDS. It seemed to us to be sensible to widen the provision so that, in line with the Bill as a whole, it encompasses not only people with AIDS—this point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Acton as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East—but the much wider group of those infected with HIV which, as the whole House acknowledges, in some ways is the most important figure, or may prove to be the most important figure, for planning purposes. I hope that that has helped to clarify still further the purpose of the paragraphs in the schedule and the reasons for the disappearance of one paragraph in particular from the previous schedule.

Mr. Brandreth *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I will come to some of the other points that have been raised, but I happily give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Brandreth: I wanted to refer to paragraph 7, which mentions

"the treatment, counselling and care of persons with AIDS or infected with HIV."

In view of the articles in the *Daily Star* and the *News of the World*, about the two nurses with AIDS and the three doctors, should it be a policy for those who have the disease or who are carriers to treat and care for those who also have the disease or are carriers?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the reports that have appeared in the newspapers to which my hon. Friend refers, but I am not in a position to make any significant additional comment on them beyond the observation that there are few known cases of health care workers becoming infected with AIDS from patients with AIDS despite, in a number of instances, needle-stick injuries. As far as I am aware, there are no known cases in this country or in the United States, where experience is much more extensive for the obvious reason that, unhappily, there are many thousands more cases, of a person becoming infected by a health worker who was himself or herself infected. It is not the purpose of this part of the schedule to identify in the way that I sense my hon. Friend was suggesting. Apart from anything else, some rather acute confidentiality issues would be raised if a report were being made public.

With the exception of some of the matters raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire, to which I am about to respond, I think that I have covered all the specific points that have been put to me during the debate. If hon. Members feel that I have not responded to their interventions, I have no doubt that they will intervene again to remind me of their earlier contributions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire said that there is a risk that the requirement to publish reports will spread alarm. In many parts of the community there is a degree of alarm about AIDS, but we would be doing no service if we were to do anything to promote the spread or continuation of complacency about AIDS. In many communities it may be that the greater risk is complacency rather than excessive alarm.

East Anglia, for example, has had only five cases of clinical AIDS up to the end of February, and three of those people are now dead. The possibility cannot be ignored, however, that there are significant numbers within East Anglia who are infected with the virus and are HIV positive. We have no means of knowing what the number is because we do not know what the total number is. It is inherently likely, however, that the number of HIV positives is about 30,000 to 40,000. That is what we think most likely at present, but during the week it has been mentioned in one quarter that it could be 100,000. This means that there will be significant numbers of these people in East Anglia.

It would be a mistake to think that because in any given district there has been no AIDS case there are no potential AIDS cases and no people who are infected with virus. The case for making reports public and publishing such information as can be made available is justified in an imperfect world. In the years between now and the end of the century there will be few parts of the country which do not have some experience of AIDS cases, even though the scale and number will undoubtedly vary widely.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire spoke about costs and pressures. Even without any requirement to report on anything in particular, it is not unknown for health authorities to seek to put pressure on central Government when it comes to the allocation of moneys and to draw attention to the desirability of having more of it. I entered the Chamber the night before last when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State was replying to an Adjournment debate that had been raised by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer). My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East was assiduously joining in the debate with other Leicester Members in making the case for additional funds for the Leicester health authority. I have no wish to encourage him to return to that issue today, still less to encourage demands for more money for Cambridge, Ealing, Gillingham, Reading or Grantham, for example. There are at least two Scottish Labour Members present, and fortunately their demands for more money would have to be directed to a different quarter.

11.45 am

Mr. Forth: Let me try to present a different angle. Let us suppose that I introduced a Bill that was based on the fact that 100,000 people die each year from nicotine-related diseases and placed an obligation on health authorities to identify these cases and to report on the resources being directed to them, thus providing a vehicle for specific pressure to be put on his Department centrally to provide more resources to treat the 100,000 suffering from a self-inflicted condition as a result of ingesting nicotine and related materials. It seems that we are departing on a new policy that could be used in future in the way that I have suggested. That is my concern.

Mr. Newton: I was about to take on board that argument. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand —I accept that he made his case with a qualification and qualified it further later — that whatever view anyone may take about the background to some of those who are HIV positive, or have AIDS, having become ill, I as a health Minister must recognise that they are ill and need treatment. I think that it is right to proceed on that basis. My hon. Friend has now drawn an analogy that is stronger than some of those that he presented earlier, but by imposing a requirement on health authorities to publish reports we are seeking to make a contribution to the effort to prevent AIDS. At present we can proceed only by means of public education and better information in trying to curb the spread of a terrible disease that poses a considerable threat to many. The same considerations do not arise in relation to the treatment of other diseases which, though at least as unfortunate, can be tackled in other ways. It would be wrong for my hon. Friend to convey the impression that the Government are devoting a degree of importance, whether through their acceptance of the Bill or in other ways, to the prevention of AIDS that they do not attach to the taking of effective action against other health problems.

During the past month my right hon. Friend has announced the introduction of a national breast cancer screening programme to tackle that problem. He has also announced a further improvement——

Dr. Marek: Long overdue.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) should not tempt me.

Dr. Marek: It is the Minister who is tempting me.

Mr. Newton: At the same time, my right hon. Friend announced further steps to try to improve the cervical cancer screening programme which is under way and which represents a significant effort in that area. Within the next month, the health education authority, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Security, will launch a major campaign directed at the problem of coronary heart disease, called "Look after your heart"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that perhaps we should now return to reports about HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry to have compounded the felony of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire by being enticed down the same path as him. I hope that I have said enough to make clear the lines of my answer. In requiring these reports, there is no question of neglecting other problems or of treating AIDS as special, except that we have a chance to stop that disease from becoming as disastrous as it could otherwise be. The background to the Bill is part of the effort to prevent that spread.

Dr. M. S. Miller: There is no doubt that the general thesis of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) is right. He did not actually say what he wished to do, but I disagree with his feelings. In referring to self-inflicted conditions, I should like to make an analogy. It is well known that the commonest cause of death in young men between the ages of 18 and 25 is motor cycle accidents. Everyone knows that that is self-inflicted. All motor cyclists know the risk that they take. Does that mean that hospitals should not treat unfortunate young men who have motor cycle accidents?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are on the content of reports.

Mr. Newton: Another piece of specific legislation has proved sensible. I refer to the compulsory wearing of crash helmets. Legislation should be directed to the nature of the problem. This legislation and the subparagraph to the schedule are sensibly directed towards the problem. The seat belts legislation was sensibly directed towards another problem, as was the crash helmets legislation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I hope that the Government will realise that it is important to be consistent and that they will encourage the making of reports, such as that produced the other day by the Health Education Council, so that maximum information may be available, on which all health decisions can be made, and not only what the Government consider, at the moment, to be the most important——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us now return to the point, shall we?

Mr. Newton: I must correct the impression given by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that that report was by the Health Education Council. He will know that the council has not considered that report and that it never properly discussed or commissioned it. The council did not know that the report was to be published or that a press conference was to be held. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will, at least, register those points.

Without going down a path which will cause you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to intervene again in my speech, I have pretty well exhausted all that I can say about this amendment and the revised schedule which it incorporates in the Bill. I hope that, even if I have dissatisfied you by the breadth of my remarks or failed to answer every last point or anxiety in the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire, I have at least dealt with the other points raised by hon. Members and that I leave them feeling reasonably satisfied.

Mr. Strang: I should like to respond briefly to some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). Although I disagree with him, I recognise that some people in the country share his views. This is one of the rare occasions that we have had to respond to that point of view, which is in a minority in the House, about the Bill.

The Minister dealt with the issue of confidentiality. I have given that matter much thought, especially after the Minister raised it on Second Reading. The more that one considers it, the more one will reach the conclusion that the local press—the Minister referred to this specifically—will almost certainly find out about the AIDS cases in its communities, long before there is a published report relating to the 12-month reporting period. I stress that the Minister and I are both aware of that point. The Bill strikes the right balance in maintaining confidentiality so far as the risk exists.

I agree with the Minister that people must understand that this is the biggest threat to public health, certainly for half a century. Therefore, it is right that the community should be worried and should desire to educate itself about the disease.

We have amended the Bill to go some way towards meeting the hon. Gentleman's point about expenditure. Paragraph 6 of the new schedule states that the authority or board will provide an estimate of the facilities and services

"in the twelve months following the reporting period."

The existing schedule, at paragraph 5, states:

"An estimate of the facilities or services which the Authority or Board will require."

Therefore, there has been a genuine attempt to meet the hon. Gentleman's anxiety.

I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman on the "largely self-inflicted" element. We are not only talking about the tragic cases of haemophiliacs who have contracted the disease through blood transfusions and no fault of their own, or about babies. I am sad to say that a high proportion of babies in Edinburgh are born with AIDS. There is the highly-publicised case of Army personnel who returned from Africa and are located in Inverness. It appears from a recent press report that the fears that some had become infected are not justified. I ask the House to consider the position of the wife of one of those service men. Is someone suggesting that her case would be self-inflicted? I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that.

The disease can undoubtedly be transmitted through heterosexual intercourse, if one party is a carrier—whether female or male. We do not know the efficiency of transmission through normal heterosexual intercourse, but it unquestionably occurs and may well become the main method of transmission. I stress that because some tabloid newspapers have almost implied that that hardly ever happens.

Mr. Forth: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the United States is the main country where that has happened and that it is well-documented? Does he further agree that a comparison between the incidence of AIDS and other related diseases in and around San Francisco and New York on the one hand and in the Mid-West on the other strongly suggests that there is a connection between

voluntary practices, such as homosexuality and drug-related practices, and the incidence of the diseases? It would be stupid to deny that, and that is the basis of my point.

Mr. Strang: I agree that there is no point in denying the facts. The nature of one particular homosexual act means that the transmission of the disease is unquestionably more efficient and frequent. That is not in dispute. In England, but not in Scotland, a high proportion of cases are among homosexuals or bi-sexuals, but I believe that that will change. The disease will be with us for many years, and because there is much more heterosexual intercourse than homosexual intercourse, there will be more cases among heterosexuals in future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Now that the hon. Gentleman has dealt with that point, I hope that he will return to amendment No. 9 and the contents of reports.

Mr. Strang: The hon. Gentleman referred to paragraph 7 of the schedule and education. Perhaps the most authoritative document available on AIDS is that of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States. The report states:

"For at least the next several years, the most effective measure for significantly reducing the spread of HIV infection is education of the public, especially those individuals at higher risk."

That is the view of the Government and of most people involved in this problem.

The schedule is important. The hon. Member's concerns should not lead him to oppose the Bill. If it turns out that some of his fears about certain paragraphs of the schedule are justified, any subsequent Government will be able to replace or adjust the paragraphs.

Amendment agreed to.

Title

Amendment made, in line 2, at end insert 'and Human Immunodeficiency Virus.'.—[*Mr. Newton.*]

Bill reported, with Amendments.

Order for Third Reading read.

12 noon

Mr. Strang: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I preface my remarks by thanking everyone who has been involved in helping to reach this stage of the Bill. I pay tribute to the commitment of the Minister for Health. He has done a great deal of work. To a large extent, it is as a consequence of his interest in the matter and the fact that he has followed the request by the Secretary of State that we should seek to approach this issue on an all-party basis that the Bill has reached this stage. I thank the officials in the DHSS AIDS unit for their work. I also thank Howard Fidderman, who has done a large amount of work on my behalf. The British Medical Association has been most helpful. Many other organisations have contributed to the consultation and dialogue that have preceded this stage of the Bill.

I shall make a special reference to the people in Edinburgh. Tragically, as all hon. Members know, Edinburgh is experiencing the lull before the storm in relation to the disease. Over 50 per cent of injecting drug misusers are known to be infected with HIV. In a short time, we shall have hundreds of AIDS cases. I pay tribute to officials of the Lothian health board—I shall not name them—and in Edinburgh district council and Lothian regional council. I also pay tribute to the councils. They are controlled by my party, but I make the point in a non-political way that both councils are adopting a responsible approach to working with the health board in the area in relation to the crisis in Edinburgh.

On HIV, clearly we agree that a new paragraph will be inserted into the schedule. It is important that we complement the schedule in plenty of time to enable us to have the best HIV estimates available for the first reports. The debate on AIDS last November was valuable. It was a credit to the House. In the debate on 21 November the Secretary of State referred to the delay between infection and the development of AIDS symptoms. He said that the average period was about five years. At that time, he reckoned that about 25 to 30 per cent. of carriers develop AIDS. Of course, if one develops AIDS, one dies. I wonder whether the Minister will state whether—perhaps it is too early to do so, following the conference that took place last Monday—the Government are thinking of revising their view of what proportion of people who become infected are likely to develop AIDS. The period of time between infection and AIDS manifesting itself may be five years or more. Therefore, it is important to discover whether this percentage is still the most reliable estimate.

The Bill is now much more comprehensive and practical. This is largely because the Government have been very helpful. The Bill, especially in the schedule, also provides for flexibility. This legislation represents the first long-term means of dealing with AIDS and it will be helpful until the end of the century. Its flexibility is important. With the consent of Parliament, the Secretary of State will be able to adjust and alter the schedule. Professionals throughout the country have given their overwhelming support to the Bill. Our debates show that there is overwhelming support for it, too, in the House.

I hope that Parliament will enact the Bill in the next few months. We are anxious that the reporting period provision should be implemented as early as possible so that, if reports are to be published in 1988, the first reporting period can end on 31 March 1988.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have a duty to protect the rights of other hon. Members whose Bills appear on the Order Paper. I remind the House that the debate on Third Reading should be confined to comment on the contents of the Bill.

12.1 pm

Mr. Rhodes James: I congratulate the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) and my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on the work that they have done on the Bill. It has been so refreshing to be able to work in an entirely non-political way. Unlike the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), most Members of Parliament are laymen, and they have had to deal with a new and ghastly problem. We are moving into uncharted waters. As laymen, our difficulty is that the expert advice is divided. That has increased our problems. The experts disagree on the key dilemma of how many carriers of HIV will contract AIDS.

Although we may not in the Bill be moving strictly in the direction of making AIDS a notifiable disease, that is nevertheless the direction in which we are moving. We are not, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) claims, spreading alarm. The

[Mr. Rhodes James]

problem is different. Today the newspapers report that British business men are ignoring the warnings about their conduct when they visit foreign countries, in particular Africa.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride referred to smallpox. This disease was eradicated. That was one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations. It was eradicated because there was the political will to do so. Polio could be eradicated, too. Global problems—and this is a global problem—can be met only by a global response. The Bill provides a further step towards the dissemination of information nationally, regionally and internationally.

I urge a great degree of honesty about educating the public. When the Earl of Avon died 18 months ago the press contacted me, as his father's biographer and as a friend of his, about the disease from which he died. I decided to tell the press the truth, but I asked them to remember that he had a family and friends and to handle the matter with sensitivity. The appeal worked. The press handled it with sensitivity. Honesty would lead to a real break through in public understanding and would help us to face what could be one of the gravest scourges of the century.

12.9 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes: I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang), who worked so hard to make sure that the Bill reached this stage. I echo his thanks to the Minister and the officials.

The whole nature of the way in which we as representatives of the people have been challenged to face a new threat that has reached every part of the country has been to react by making sure that ignorance is broken down and that information and education are increased. The great thing about this short Bill is that if we can speed its way on to the statute book people will have reports containing accurate information that can be used to deal with the speculation and misinformation that lead to so many unhelpful suggestions, comments and reactions.

We have a joint responsibility to make sure that we work together as a community for two ultimate objectives. First, we must achieve as soon as possible a cure for the disease. Secondly, we must make sure that as long as people are afflicted by AIDS, either as carriers of the virus or as contractors of the disease, they will have available to them their Health Service and the talents of our people so that we can give those who may have many more years to live the opportunity to live a full life without discrimination or prejudice, and give them help and support during the most crucial period of their lives.

The Bill gives us the opportunity to be a more responsible community, and that will enable us to see the AIDS threat, not in the way that it has been seen up to now, as a threat to people's dignity, but as a challenge to us as a caring nation and respond to a new problem that has come our way so dramatically in recent years.

12.11 pm

Dr. Marek: The House still has a lot of business before it, so I shall not repeat the points that I made in Committee. The points have been made by the hon. Members for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). This is a good Bill, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on presenting it and hope that it is successful in the other place. I am sure that Britain will benefit from the Bill.

12.12 pm

Mr. Newton: I join in the congratulations to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on introducing the Bill and on the vast amount of work that he and his assistant have put into getting it right. The hon. Gentleman kindly said that I and my officials had done a lot of work as well. I hope that that is true. Certainly I feel that I have reached the stage of taking almost as fatherly an interest in the Bill as has the hon. Gentleman.

Although the Bill is deliberately limited in its scope, it is a helpful step in the fight against this disease. The information that will be contained in the annual reports from health authorities and boards will paint a valuable picture of the situation across the country. It will help to fill in some gaps in our knowledge and may be of special value in those areas that have yet to experience the full brunt of the disease.

In addition, the essential work of local and national planning that will have to go on will be assisted by having this information produced on a regular basis and in a format that will enable useful comparisons to be made. I confirm our intention that the reporting period will be the same throughout the United Kingdom. We are still considering the precise period, but it will probably be related to the financial year rather than to the calendar year, in order to tie it in with other statistical returns that are used for planning purposes. That covers a point made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East.

The details are not included in the Bill, because it is sensible to keep an element of flexibility to avoid the need for primary legislation if changes in the reporting year become desirable. As the Bill now stands, The Secretary of State is able to prescribe appropriate reporting periods in secondary legislation. I underline the commitment in the Bill that the first reports will be published before the end of next year. That again relates to a point made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East.

Northern Ireland has not been mentioned today, but preparation of the Northern Ireland legislation is in hand. The Order in Council relating to Northern Ireland will be made as soon as possible after the Bill receives Royal Assent.

It is clear from our proceedings this morning that, with some reservations about wider matters, the Bill has the full support of the House, and certainly that of the Government. A number of helpful amendments have been made, which will increase its value. I hope that the Bill will enable all of us who have been concerned in its proceedings to feel that we have at least made some contribution to one of the most important tasks facing this Parliament and anyone who is concerned with health in this country. We must do all that we can to prevent the spread of the disease. If we have taken even a small step in that direction this morning, it has been a morning well spent. I commend the Bill and advise the House to agree to its Third Reading.

Question put and agreed to,

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Crossbows Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

12.16 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Much has happened since the Second Reading on 30 January and the Committee stage on 25 February. I want to thank all members of the Committee and all my supporters for their help during the passage of the Bill to date.

Many representations have continued to come into my office since the Bill was first announced. I am still as strongly committed to the Bill as I was on day one. It is a fact of life that any crossbow in good condition and set up properly can put any competent rifleman rapidly on target. The only difference between shooting a crossbow and a rifle is that of missile speed and trajectory. Both travel at 250 ft a second.

These are killer machines. They are weapons of death, weapons of violence and weapons of crime, and are lethal to human beings and animals alike. Any action that will lessen violence must be considered any small contribution to the fight against rising crime.

We must remember that crossbows can kill without making a sound. More evidence of their accuracy has come to light since our last debate. We know that they can be very accurate at distances of up to 25 yd. In competitions, ranges of up to 60 yd are used, but that requires great skill on the part of the shooter.

A powerful crossbow has potential as a hunting weapon—it can be used to kill a deer or a person at 25 to 30 yd. At 50 to 60 yd, although not so very accurate, a crossbow can still kill. At 100 yd it can inflict a serious injury, although the chances of its hitting the target are remote.

The newspaper reports in the past few days have been just as worrying. My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison), who sends his apologies for being absent today, has sent me a cutting from the *Guardian and Gazette* for 13 March 1987, which, under the heading, "Crossbow bolt into school", said:

"Pupils had a lucky escape on Monday when a metal-tipped crossbow bolt was fired into a school physics laboratory.

The bolt came in like a bullet . . . He"—

that is the head of the joint sixth form centre—

"told the Gazette that the bolt's speed was such that it did not even shatter the window."

An incident described in *The Journal*, a Newcastle upon Tyne publication, on 9 February 1987, is similarly horrifying. Under the heading

"Sniper in crossbow bus attack"

it said,

"Police were last night hunting a sniper who fired a 14-inch long metal arrow into a passing bus and narrowly missed a young mother and her two-year-old child.

Either could easily have been killed, and the bus driver and a passenger leapt from the double-decker to chase the bowman, but could not see him in the darkness."

The Times, on 4 December 1986, provided further evidence. Under the heading,

"Life for man who shot and killed gardener with home-made rifle".

It said:

"A man was yesterday jailed for life for a killing during a robbery in which he and two accomplices used crossbows and a home-made rifle to steal cash, jewellery and antiques worth £6,000. His son and Dougal used crossbows to maim a great dane and two boxer dogs, and Terence Clark shot the great dane dead."

The *Daily Telegraph* of 25 February, under the heading,

"Man shot in leg by crossbow"

said that a postman

"was recovering in hospital last night after being shot by an unknown attacker with a crossbow while he stood at a bus stop."

He was

"hit by a bolt from the weapon which went 7 in into his thigh."

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has recorded nearly 200 crossbow attacks on animals during 1986. There has been a significant increase in attacks.

The *Leatherhead Advertiser* referred to the

"work of a fiend"

and a

"Cat's week of agony with crossbow wound".

The RSPCA reports that a person in Carmarthen shot a family pet, a cat, with a crossbow bolt and shows a nasty photograph of that suffering cat.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for his support. On 3 December 1986 he said:

"Crossbows are, however, dangerous weapons in the wrong hands, and I do not consider that they are suitable to be in possession of unsupervised young people."—[*Official Report*, 3 December 1986; Vol. 106, c. *633*.]

In the *Daily Mail* he said that he was "keen" to act fast on crossbow law. The House of Lords debated this matter on 24 March and the concern expressed about wanting the crossbow legislation to be supported so as to ban these weapons of death was as great as mine.

A money resolution has not been required because the Home Office obviously wants this legislation. No additional funds are requested by the House.

In our debates on clause 6 we discussed increasing the fines and penalties imposed on people of 17 who injure themselves, their animals and other people by using crossbows. The Committee considered that the penalty under level 3 of a fine of £400 was not sufficiently high. I understand that, under section 36(1) of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, as amended by the Criminal Penalties etc. (Increase) Order 1984, statutory instrument No. 447/1984, magistrates courts cannot impose on a person under 17 a fine exceeding £400 for any offence. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister can confirm that all fines and penalties are increased from time to time, as they were in 1984. I hope that the penalties imposed on a child under 17 for buying, hiring or possessing a crossbow and receiving a level 3 fine are liable to be upgraded in line with inflation, as presumably are all other fines. I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Minister for sending me the Home Office guidelines on court sentences. The level 5 fine imposed on a person who sells crossbows is £2,000. Although I welcome that as being naturally tough, as one who believes in tough sentencing, I hope that it will also be upgraded in line with inflation.

The legislation provides for the punishments to ensure that young social miscreants will not take advantage of being able easily to get hold of crossbows. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has already sent out guidelines to all traders to ensure that they are made aware that if they sell a crossbow—a weapon of death—to someone under 17 they will be liable to severe penalties, including a term of imprisonment and a £2,000 fine.

[Mr. Peter Bruinvels]

The statistics show that it is important that the Bill is put on the statute book as quickly as possible. In 1986 there were 115 incidents of misuse of crossbows. Of those incidents, five were domestic. There were two suicides, two attempted suicides, one misuse of a crossbow, 10 injuries to persons and many nasty injuries to animals. That is a terrible, shocking indictment of the way in which our young behave.

The letters that I have received to wish me good luck with the Bill are the most supportive that I have received on any matter other than the death penalty. I pay tribute to the Police Federation, which said:

"We strongly support your Bill. Crossbows should only be available to persons who have bona fide rights to use them . . . The only logical bona fide users are sportsmen who are practised in the art of this type of weapon."

The National Farmers Union says that it supports me in my efforts to

"secure a modicum of control over the availability of crossbows for sale."

It goes on to say:

"Successive Governments have declined to take positive action to combat the growing menace of this silent but lethal weapon, and we welcome the support for your Bill offered by the present Government."

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds says:

"Following your success in the ballot for Private Members' Bills I was pleased to see that you have taken on the issue of stricter crossbow control."

The British Veterinary Association says that it supports my endeavours to,

"introduce some controls over the sale and use of crossbows and therefore welcomes your Bill".

It gives me great pleasure to move the Third Reading of the Bill. I know that the Bill will punish those who misuse these weapons. I know that the House will support my Bill to control this shocking misuse of crossbows. I know that by prohibiting the sale of crossbows to anyone under the age of 17 years and by prohibiting the hire of crossbows to those same people we will prevent crossbows from falling into the hands of unsupervised youngsters. The situation as it was was undesirable. The legislation that I am trying to introduce today is similar to the firearms legislation. Indeed, I used very similar wording to the firearms legislation.

There will be a proper power of search to ensure that no crossbow can be whipped into a football ground, reassembled and let off, injuring football spectators. The sale, purchase and possession of crossbows by those under 17 years of age will be enshrined in the Bill to prevent abuse in the future. I urge all tradesmen to act responsibly to ensure that they do not sell crossbows to people under the age of 17 years.

I should like to thank the *Daily Mail* for the use of its thunderbolt crossbow, which at one time I tried to bring into the House. Most of the hon. Members who saw it were amazed by the accuracy of the bolt and the bow. I should like to wish the Bill every success in another place, where it will be guided through by Lord Brougham and Vaux.

I pay tribute to the Home Office civil servants, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. The Bill is desperately needed. It will stop crossbow misuse protect animals and children and take temptation out of the minds of some evil-minded young people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I shall repeat the advice that I offered to the House earlier, because I have a duty to protect the rights of hon. Members whose Bills are on the Order Paper. On Third Reading, speeches should be confined to comment on the contents of the Bill.

12.28 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): I apologise for not being here at the start of this short debate, but I was detained at Heathrow by circumstances beyond my control.

I was a supporter of the Bill and I rise to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) for the skill and tenacity that he has shown in getting the Bill this far in its stages through Parliament. The Bill is needed and it has the right balance. I thank the Under-Secretary of State for the help and guidance that he gave us in Committee. I speak on behalf of some of the supporters from the Opposition parties who, unfortunately, are not present today, in wishing the Bill well in its further stages.

12.29 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I do not wish to delay progress on the Bill for long, but I feel that it is important that, on behalf of Conservative Back Benchers, I should congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on taking his Bill this far.

The Bill is an ideal example of how private Members' time can be used to great advantage. The whole of society, and particularly people with a great love for animals, are greatly in my hon. Friend's debt. People have been able to get away for far too long with using these lethal weapons and I am sorry that the problem was not tackled in earlier legislation. However, better late than never.

My only regret is that the Bill does not go further, because I believe that many people over the age of 17 also act irresponsibly. However, we must consider the Bill as a first step and I hope that the Home Office will watch matters carefully and see how the statistics move after the passing of the Bill. I also hope that, if necessary, we can extend the provisions of the Bill to other groups of people and perhaps introduce licences for crossbows.

My hon. Friend gave us some horrific details of how crossbows have been used at football matches and against animals. I feel that older people might have been responsible for such actions, but I welcome the Bill as a first step and wish it a speedy passage on to the statute book.

12.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On behalf of the Labour party, I welcome the Bill. Home Office Ministers have been receiving representations from Labour Members on the growing worry about the accessibility of all sorts of weapons to virtually anyone who seriously wants to get them.

The Bill introduces an element of restriction on the sale of crossbows, but we should like it to go considerably further, although we realise that we could not expect that of a private Member's Bill. We have made representations to the Home Secretary in favour of much greater controls on the advertising and sale of all weapons, about the establishment of shops that sell such weapons and about whether we can agree changes in the law on the possession of weapons, including the increasing use of knives in

criminal activities. We want the public and the police to be protected from the growing use of weapons by criminals.

We hope that the Home Secretary will speed up his consideration of our representations and that the House will support measures to make our country a safer place.

12.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Brunviels) on the persuasive way in which he introduced his Bill. He has taken it through the House with great distinction, and that has not been entirely easy, because complicated points of law and practice are involved and my hon. Friend had to carry the measure through its Committee stage. I thank my hon. Friend and congratulate him on his achievements, not least the securing of all-party support for the Bill.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) in his place, because he played a prominent part in the Committee stage of the Bill, and his support was greatly appreciated. I am also pleased to see a number of my hon. Friends who served on the Committee and have spoken in the debate, including my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne).

The Bill is important, and it is equally important that its purpose and direction are fully understood. Clause 1 is designed to close a gap in the law that has existed for a long time. Although there are restrictions on the right to possess offensive weapons, there has not hitherto been any restriction on the selling or letting for hire of crossbows. Clause 1 contains the main provision of the Bill, which introduces a restriction on the ability of a vendor or hirer to sell, or let on hire, a crossbow.

We could have proceeded in a number of ways. We have been contemplating, and will introduce, guidance to traders, but we felt that we should go further and impose a statutory prohibition. There is at present no definition of the word crossbow, which troubled hon. Members on both sides of the House. However, we came to the conclusion that the word did not require a definition on the face of the Bill: the animal was perfectly recognisable. There is also no amplification of the defence of "reasonable ground" that appears on the face of the Bill. Again, we concluded—I think that most hon. Members agree—that the courts are in a position, and experienced enough, to determine the meaning of the phrase in the context of such a statutory provision.

If I had to summarise clause 1, I would say that it makes it an offence for a dealer to sell or hire a crossbow to anyone under the age of 17, unless he has reasonable ground to believe that that person is 17 or older. I am emphasising the responsibilities of the dealer, but the prohibition is general, and would apply equally to the non-dealer. However, for our present purposes, we are concerned with the primary mischief, which must inevitably involve the dealer.

That is the main impact of clause 1, but it also extends to mail order offences. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East was very concerned about the mail order sale of crossbows. Clause 1, couched in its present form, would extend to such sales. A person who sold a crossbow by mail order to a person under the age of 17 would be committing an offence, unless the statutory defence provided in the clause was satisfied.

Clause 2 makes it an offence for persons under 17 to buy or hire a crossbow, or part of a crossbow. It is, as it were, the other part of clause 1. I should emphasise one or two points. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East raised the question of the relationship between principal and agent. What would happen if an under-age person obtained the services of an over-age person to purchase a crossbow or part of a crossbow? The over-age person might be committing an offence by assisting another person to commit an offence. Moreover, there might be such a close connection between the under-age person and the over-age person as to enable the court to say that the under-age person was committing an offence through the intervention of the over-age person. I hope that the House will think that we have dealt with the anxieties so eloquently expressed in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East.

Of course, we have not concentrated only on the offence of sale. We have also concentrated on the offence of "letting on hire". If we did not have that provision, it would not be difficult for an unscrupulous dealer to push a coach and horses through the legislation.

Clause 3 adds another particular offence—possession of a crossbow, or parts of a crossbow, which

"can be assembled to form a crossbow capable of discharging a missile".

Clause 3 deals with several concepts. The first involves the words "who has with him". I have been asked by hon. Members about the import of that phrase. It is narrower than the concept of possession. In law the concept of possession does not inevitably involve the concept of control. The phrase "who has with him" involves a concept of control, so if a crossbow is put on the wall of a room by an under-age person's parents, the chances are that the court would not say of the under-age person in the room that he had the crossbow "with him" because he has no control over it. If we had used the word "possession" the court might come to a wholly different conclusion.

The concept of supervision involves presence, knowledge and control. I hope the House believes that we have gone sufficiently far in clause 3 to meet the mischief with which we are concerned—a young person having in his possession a crossbow.

Hon. Members have asked me about the Prevention of Crime Act 1953. They say, "Is not a crossbow an offensive weapon for the purpose of that statute?" That has not been decisively determined by the courts. The best advice that I have received — and it is my opinion — is that a crossbow is not, per se, an offensive weapon. The question is whether the prosecution could establish a criminal intent to use it as an offensive weapon. For that reason, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East sensibly ensures in the Bill that there is a particular offence of having a crossbow "with him".

Mr. Dobson: I was not here for the Committee stage, but I am interested in the subject. I am slightly perturbed about what seems to be a restrictive element in clause 3*(b)*, which states that it will be an offence if someone possesses

"parts of a crossbow, which together (and without any other parts) can be assembled to form a crossbow capable of discharging a missile."

That seems restrictive, because it is possible for someone with parts of a crossbow in his possession to throw away a vital part such as the trigger mechanism, which is quite small. He would be able to demonstrate that he had with him parts of the crossbow that could not be assembled to

[Mr. Dobson]

form a crossbow capable of discharging a missile. I believe that some people who would be carrying parts of a crossbow in such circumstances are exactly the type of people who are pretty fly about slinging away the necessary bit. I wonder whether the restriction can be attended to in the House of Lords?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member has shown that he should be a defence lawyer. Clearly, he is a lawyer manqué at heart. I often wonder why he bothers to intervene in the debates on health. He knows a certain amount about the law, but I am not sure that he knows so much about health care, but that is a different matter.

Mr. Dobson: It is because I have Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn in my constituency.

Mr. Hogg: I am delighted by that observation. The hon. Gentleman's argument needs careful examination. He is suggesting that if a potential offender disposes of the trigger, the string or some other essential part of the crossbow, the prosecution would be unable to establish an offence under clause 3. However, it is a matter of evidence.

If a young person is seen traipsing down the street holding a crossbow in a collapsed form and is stopped, and if a puddle is seen to well up in an adjoining canal, and if perchance the trigger is missing, I do not think that it would be beyond the scope of a clever police officer to say, "My friend, did you throw the trigger away?" Or perhaps, "Why are you going about with a collapsed crossbow that does not have a trigger?" That sort of question would appeal to any police officer faced with such a problem. If the police officer could satisfy the court that the young offender cast the trigger into the canal and hence caused the puddle, the offence would be proved. It is a matter of evidence.

Mr. Dobson: I was not trying to make a daft debating point. I believe that the qualifications in clause 3(*b*) will, at some stage in the proceedings at a magistrates court or Crown court, end up with the police giving evidence and some slick lawyer, no doubt from Lincoln's Inn or Gray's Inn in my constituency, successfully pleading that the pieces of the crossbow were not capable of being made up into a crossbow that could discharge a missile. The Home Office officials have been helpful and I believe that it would be worth while if they studied this problem and came up with something better. We do not want the police to be faced with taking people to court and then not succeeding because of something daft that we have done in this House.

Mr. Hogg: If I may say so, my advice to the hon. Gentleman is that he should not refer to his constituents as "slick lawyers"——

Mr. Dobson: They are stupid lawyers.

Mr. Hogg: Stupid lawyers! If the hon. Gentleman insists on referring to his constituents in such pejorative terms, he should not be the least bit surprised when they refuse to vote for him.

Mr. Dobson: I do not expect them to vote for me.

Mr. Hogg: I am not in the least bit surprised.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South) *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I give way to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Carlisle: If that is the view of my Member of Parliament, I certainly shall not vote for him.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I believe that we should get back to crossbows.

Mr. Hogg: I believe that we should let the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) off the hook, as I see that he is becoming increasingly embarrassed. In the desire to maintain the all-party spirit on this legislation, I believe that we must press ahead.

With regard to clauses 1, 2 and 3, I believe that we have got the balance about right or I should say that my hon. Friend the member for Leicester, East has got the balance right. There are several competing interests that we have to take into account. The first is the absolute necessity to introduce some form of statutory control of the type that we have discussed. Secondly, we have to bear in mind that there is a legitimate sporting activity that needs to be protected. This sport is growing, and my hon. Friend is anxious that it should be protected, and he is right. I believe that in the fullness of time it will have Olympic status. As my hon. Friend knows, the sport is enjoyed by the handicapped. My hon. Friend's reputation in this sphere is second to none. Therefore, we have to take into account the need to protect the genuine sportsman.

The third, and equally important, point is the need to maintain employment. As the House knows, about 700 jobs, excluding retail, are involved. The principal manufacturer is Barnett International. I do not have the figures beyond 1985, but I understand that in 1985 the turnover was over £4 million, that about 16,000 or 17,000 crossbows were sold in England and Wales, and that the majority — about 85 per cent. — of crossbows are exported. Therefore, when we consider such legislation, we must keep a balance between the need to impose restrictions, the desire to protect the sportsman and the need to protect the industry. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East feels that we have the balance about right.

One aspect of getting the balance right is clause 5, which deals with toy crossbows. Not many toy crossbows are produced — it is a small market — but the most obvious example is a crossbow called the Bandit, which is manufactured by Barnett International. The draw weight, as a concept, is the weight necessary to cock the crossbow. The Home Office forensic science department has looked at what would be a safe weight. The Bandit, which is an example of a toy crossbow, has a draw weight of 2·5 lbs. Taking, for safety — to take account of fluctuations in batches — a draw weight of 3 lbs, that justifies the figure of 1·4 kg, which appears in clause 5. By introducing that limit, we hope to ensure that toys that are marketed as toys are not subject to the prohibition in the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East spoke about penalties, which are the subject of clause 6. We have made a distinction between the punishment that can be awarded to a person committing an offence under clause 1 and the punishment that can be imposed on the under-age person under clauses 2 and 3. In clause 1 we are dealing with a maximum of six months' imprisonment, or a scale 5 fine, which is £2,000 whereas offences under clauses 2 and 3 are punishable by a scale 3 fine.

My hon. Friend is correct in his description of the reason why we could not impose a more substantial fine on the under-age offender. The legislation prevents us from imposing a fine in excess of £400 on a person under 17. He asked whether the legislation dealing with fines is likely to result in uprating. It is. There is a procedure for the uprating of scales, and that will happen. However, as inflation is reduced to low figures, which is the consequence of the Government's policy, we do not uprate the figures as often as they had to be in the days when the Labour party was in charge, when it was supported for a considerable time by the Liberal party. That is another point that my hon. Friend might bear in mind.

Your predecessor in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rightly urged upon me the need to respect the business of the House, in the sense that there are other pressing measures to be debated. Therefore, I should draw my remarks to a conclusion. I should like to end as I began, by saying that the Home Office was pleased to have the opportunity of supporting the Bill, so eloquently argued and skilfully carried through by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Community Health Councils (Access to Information) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Clause 1

ACCESS TO MEETINGS AND DOCUMENTS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

12.55 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 3, line 14, after 'effect', insert

'with the insertion at the end of paragraph 1 (information concerning employees of the authority) of the words "or any regional health authority or district health authority within whose region or district the authority exercises functions" and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this we shall take amendments Nos. 2 and 3.

Mr. Lewis: The Bill was considered shortly in Committee and it was found that one or two things had been overlooked, hence these three tidying-up amendments. Amendment No. 1 is fairly simple. It addresses the need to include employees of district and regional health authorities in the exemption that the Secretary of State can order from having to disclose information under the Bill. He may do so when personal reasons are involved.

Amendments Nos. 2 and 3 merely substitute "district" for "area". We failed to notice in Committee that the old descriptions of health authorities had been used instead of the ones that followed the 1980 legislation.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I support the amendments. The Government have an obvious interest in ensuring that any legislation that reaches the statute book is as good as it can be made. There were defects in the Bill, and the amendments put things right.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 2, line 34, leave out 'Area' and insert 'District'.

No. 3, in line 36, leave out 'Area' and insert 'District'.—*[Mr. Terry Lewis.]*

12.56 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The Bill has been referred to by some colleagues as a minnow, and I have described it as modest. It is another useful step, however, towards freedom of information. It is a useful and not faltering step to opening up Government and public life affairs to those who use the services of the National Health Service. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have supported it, not least the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). The hon. Lady has given invaluable support and I have been talked about for being seen with her in the corridors of the House over the past few months. On these occasions we have been seeking to smooth the passage of the Bill. I thank the officials of the DHSS and the parliamentary draughtsmen for the help that they have given.

12.58 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I thank the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) for

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

piloting this extra piece of freedom of information legislation through the House. The Bill has enjoyed allparty support and we made sure in Committee that we got it right as we could. The Bill will allow those in the Health Service, which is one of the issues of the greatest national concern, to be able to feel that they are more in control and more well-equipped with information. It will have a significant effect on people's access to information about the Health Service. It is a fundamental improvement, and I congratulate the hon. Gentlemen on the Bill.

12.59 pm

Mr. Newton: First, in a more than conventional way, I congratulate the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) on getting his Bill to this stage. He has kindly acknowledged the help that he has been given by the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I hope that I can modestly claim that I too was as helpful as I could be, slightly behind the scenes, at an earlier stage, in enabling us to have this debate today. That is a slightly roundabout way of saying that, although we would not have chosen to legislate in this area—I am certain that we would not have regarded it as a priority for Government legislation—as the hon. Gentleman knows, we are ready to accept the Bill.

It has been suggested that the provisions are rather heavy for small bodies, such as community health councils, to comply with. Frankly, I do not agree with that. Provided that they are well organised, it should be within their competence and resources to implement the Bill's provisions. As community health councils are normally advocates of openness, and provided that they sincerely wish to be as open as possible, they will not need bureaucratic mechanisms to implement its provisions.

Although Ministers of all political colours and persuasions occasionally find the comments of community health councils tiresome—indeed, they occasionally find tiresome the comments of regional and district health authorities—a community health council which works well performs a useful function in articulating some of the concerns of local people and groups about the Health Service. Those councils have, of course, a statutory position on consultation written in in relation to closure proposals, giving them significant capacity to make their views known and to ensure that they are considered. It is entirely within their purpose, function and approach to the Health Service that those councils should deal with the public as openly as possible themselves. Therefore, it seems entirely reasonable to ask them to conform with the obligations imposed by the Bill.

I am happy to allow the House to decide that without further guidance from me and to say that the Bill should have a Third Reading.

1.1 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): It is appropriate that on the weekend when the Prime Minister is going to Moscow we should welcome this little bit of what Mr. Gorbachev would refer to as "glasnost" on the activities of community health councils.

One of the problems of improving access to information is that we seem to take one step forward, but two steps backwards. Therefore, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) on this extension to freedom of information in the week when, but for a stand of principle by Sir Douglas Black, the former president of the Royal College of Physicians, we might never have heard of the report from the Health Education Council on the health divide in this country. Nevertheless, I welcome this measure.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Gaming (Amendment) Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee; reported, without amendment. Order for Third Reading read.

1.4 pm

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I should like to explain briefly the purpose and effect of the Bill. It has a respectable parentage in that it puts into effect a recommendation of the Royal Commission on gambling, which was chaired by Lord Rothschild. It also had a considerable period of gestation, since the Royal Commission reported as long ago as July 1978. Therefore, there has been a gestation period of nine years, rather than the more usual nine months.

The Bill amends section 18 of the Gaming Act 1968, which is the parent Act, and relates to the control of gaming. Section 18 deals with the hours of gaming in permitted casinos and clubs on a Sunday. At present on weekdays gaming may take place between 2 pm and 4 am, but on Saturday night to Sunday the hours are different. In London they are from 2 pm on Saturday until 3 am on Sunday, which is an hour less than on weekdays, and in the rest of the country it is from 2 pm until 2 am, which is two hours less. Ironically, Saturday night is the most popular night, and the Royal Commission drew attention to that illogicality. It stated:

"We find it rather illogical that casinos should have to close one or two hours earlier on Saturday night/Sunday morning (which is perhaps the most popular night of the week for gaming) than on other nights, we therefore recommend that the closing time for casinos should be 4 am. on each night of the week and in all parts of the country."

The Bill makes casino hours on Sunday the same as for the rest of the week in London and the rest of the country.

That recommendation not only comes from the Royal Commission but has the support of the Gaming Board. We discussed the matter with the board, which is satisfied that there is an unstimulated demand for the Bill. The Bill was introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Harris of Greenwich and received the support of both Front Benches. The Opposition spokesman was Baroness Ewart-Biggs who pointed out that the Bill was needed by the casinos and would be welcomed by those who use them.

Casinos are a substantial foreign currency earner. About 115 licensed casinos under the control of the Gaming Board raise about £150 million in foreign currency a year.

I commend the Bill to the House. It received support from both sides in the House of Lords, is approved by the Gaming Board and implements the recommendation of the Royal Commission.

1.8 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): As I represent Burton on Trent, which is fast becoming the slot-machine manufacturing centre of Britain, I support the Bill. It is patent to everybody that any sensible flexibility which meets with the approval of all interested parties will be good for Britain and tourism.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The casino economy.

Mr. Lawrence: Labour Members may laugh at the casino economy. We do not have a casino economy, but we have a thriving, prosperous economy which has been underlined by the remarkable success and achievement of the Budget. *[Interruption.]* It is remarkable that every success for Britain becomes a failure for the Labour party. There is no doubt that, when a Chancellor can reduce taxes and public borrowing, and increase public spending on education and health by nearly £5 billion, it is a great achievement. This is not, of course, a casino economy. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) speak with their tongues in their cheeks.

The object of the exercise is to increase employment, and all hon. Members would want to do that. There is no greater immediate scope for the increase of employment than the improvement of tourism. That requires flexibility and good sense in our gaming laws. It also requires flexibility and good sense in our licensing laws. I am anxious that we should get on to the next business. I hope that we shall be able to advance the flexibility and good sense of the Government's licensing policy and that it will reach the statute book.

Of course, jobs depend upon tourism. It is not only the employment of croupiers and people who work in casinos that are attractive to foreign tourists, but a considerable number of people in Burton on Trent owe their jobs to the expansion of that part of the casino industry that relies upon gaming machines.

We must compliment all those who are concerned with the introduction of this Bill, both in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. I give considerable credit and thanks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) who introduced the Bill. I am sure that, notwithstanding the ribaldry of Opposition Members, it will gain the support of all hon. Members.

1.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) has explained the purpose of and justification for the Bill. It remains for me to do just two things. First, the Government support the Bill, wish it well and hope that it receives its Third Reading. Secondly, I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the clear and lucid way in which he described what is inevitably a rather complicated aspect of the law.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: The Bill in no way affects the powers of licensing justices to control a casino. It provides only for maximum permitted hours.

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. and learned Friend is wholly right. I am glad that he raised that point.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the tactical skill that he and Lord Harris of Greenwich have shown in securing the passage of the Bill through the two Houses.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

1.12 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Who is responsible for the accuracy of the Annunciator? My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) dashed into the Chamber because, as I understand it, when I was speaking on the Community Health Councils (Access to Information) Bill, the Annunciator announced that Mr.

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

Dobs was speaking. Despite the close physical resemblance between us, and also the exceedingly crowded Chamber today, which would explain any confusion, we would like an end put to this error. It has happened several times.

Mr. Alfred Dobs (Battersea): Further to that point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker I have sympathy with the people who work the Annunciators. My hon. Friend and I are often mistaken for each other. He is called Alf and I am called Frank! I understand the reason for the confusion. Nevertheless, it would help if the matter could be sorted out, notwithstanding, as my hon. Friend said, the resemblance between our appearances.

Mr. Lawrence: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am often mistaken for my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), although he is much more attractive than I am. At an engagement the other evening, I was mistaken for my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival). I understand why those who operate the machinery can be confused.

I draw your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to another problem. When I looked at the Annunciator, I saw that the Bill of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) was being discussed in Committee. I hurtled into the Chamber and began to prepare my address to a crowded House for Third Reading, only to find that we were nearing the end of the Third Reading debate. If my Third Reading speech bore any marks of inadequate preparation, it was due to the fact that I was not sufficiently alerted by the Annunciator to the fact that the debate on Third Reading had already begun and that the Committee stage was over.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I understand the hon. and learned Gentleman's point of order. The Committee stage was dealt with very efficiently and quickly. I sympathise with those who run the Annunciator system. I am often confused when I look round the Chamber and have to call hon. Members to speak. However, I shall certainly have the matter looked into.

Licensing (Amendment) Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[30 January]—That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

1.16 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Bill was introduced on 30 January by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), and the whole House has congratulated him on his good fortune. I, alas, cannot congratulate him on the long title. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has already said that there is considerable dissatisfaction about the lack of flexibility in the licensing hours, but the narrowness of the Bill's provisions do not serve well either the House or the British public.

The licensing principle in respect of the consumption of liquor is sometimes misrepresented. In any debate on these subjects reference is made to the accident by which licensing began during the 1914-18 war. Reference is made to munitions and Lloyd George and to the fact that we are still hampered by those wartime impositions. Licensing is, however, appropriate. The present laws and regulations may not be the best, but it is questionable to claim that some sort of licensing and control is inappropriate. Although it can be beneficial, alcohol is a dangerous substance. Our previous debate illustrated that fact.

Society has become much more complex since the regulations were introduced. Years ago, carts and horses were not licensed. It was only when motor cars were invented that motor cars and their drivers had to be licensed. The philosophy of Conservative Members is that the influence of the state must be got rid of as much as possible. However, even in the most extreme Right-wing regimes that Conservative Members may personally favour there are regulations to deal with dangerous substances. For example, nobody would think of getting rid of the regulations covering dangerous substances in chemical works, or in nuclear power stations, or in any other manufacturing process; nor would they think of getting rid of the regulations covering guns or crossbows, a subject that we debated a short time ago. Therefore, there must be some form of regulation by statute covering dangerous substances. I think there is universal agreement that alcohol, given its conditions of sale, taxation and use, must at least be seen as a potentially dangerous substance. The recent crime figures showing an increase in violence, which I shall deal with shortly, bear that out.

As I have said, the Bill deals with only one aspect of those regulations—the period of licensing. It increases the period during which licensed premises may, on application to justices, be kept open. That period is 13 hours, during which time the premises can be open for only 12 hours between 10.30 am and 11.30 pm. If a licence is given for a flexible hour, the licensee will decide which hour out of those 13 hours he must close his premises.

Judging by the speeches in the earlier part of Second Reading, this looks a reasonable arrangement. Many reasonable speeches were made by Conservative hon. Members. Indeed, one can make a reasonable case based entirely on hours and human freedom, but I want to put this into a rather wider perspective, because we cannot dissociate hours and availability from the whole question

of consumption of alcohol, its effect on the general health of the nation, the use to which it is put and the dangers that might arise from an extra half hour in the general licensing period of many premises.

The hon. Member for Eastwood will agree, I hope, that at first glance the relatively modest effect of the Bill seems to be an extra half-hour of drinking time or drinking-up time in most licensed premises. I think I see him nod assent to that assumption. That would be the general effect of the Bill in any premises that avail themselves of the facility —if it is approved.

I shall not dwell on the consumption of alcohol in other places. The consumption of alcohol on licensed premises has many advantages, and those were advertised in the previous debate. Of course there has been an enormous increase in the consumption of alcohol in the home, and its general availability is now much greater that it was. The House may or may not have been cognisance of the social repercussions of that on society. Television advertising and example—that the smart thing to do is to consume increased amounts of alcohol—are beyond the scope of the Bill.

When the hon. Member for Eastwood replies to the debate, perhaps he will tell us whether he has made any estimate of the likely increase in hours during which licensed premises will be open. I am not sure of the present general availability of alcohol, because that varies from one part of Britain to another. No doubt licensed premises will not make use of all the time during which they can open. It is entirely up to the licensee to open for a shorter time than he did before, and if there is a movement towards later closing—which I suspect will be the trend if the Bill goes through—there will be many half-hours at the end of the day.

I should also be interested to hear whether the hon. Gentleman has made any estimate of the increased hours that will be available in on-licence premises. In the previous debate I think it was said that there would probably be a 75 per cent. take-up of the facilities that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

There is a good deal of support for well-managed houses on the on-system. There is much advantage in having consumption in the right atmosphere under the right sort of management and conditions. That view was universal in the House during the last debate. Well managed clubs and houses have an attraction of their own, and the consumption of alcohol can be carried out there in a proper, well-regulated atmosphere in which civilised behaviour prevails and there are no difficulties. That is a generally accepted and advantageous feature of the existing regulations. It is one of the distinct advantages of the present regulation and licensing system, particularly for the brewers, who can ensure that the licensees—in free houses, the management—live up to the standards required by the locality.

We all know that there are pressures on some licensees to increase consumption, particularly if they are managers who are not licensing their own houses. Not everyone agrees to increased consumption, and some licensing sessions can become fairly lively when the subject is discussed. Police sanctions may be applied, and there may be complaints from neighbours.

Not long ago, I was receiving constant complaints in my constituency about certain licensed premises. I told the person concerned that all he had to do was to go to the next brewster session and complain. The next day, I went to the premises to check, and found that they had been closed by agreement between the police and the brewers, who agreed that things had gone too far and had to stop. That is another advantage of the present system, and I am sure that none of us is against it.

We must examine the effect of the extra time that may become available, and, in particular, the half-hour at the end of the day. On Second Reading, the hon. Member for Eastwood said:

"The British Tourist Authority has estimated that the Bill would create about 50,000 extra jobs and the brewers' estimate is an extra 25,000."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1987; Vol. 109, c. 640.]

That is an enormous number of extra jobs. No hon. Member would wish any opportunity for increased employment to be cast aside lightly. Employment in any area may have advantages, but I want the hon. Member for Eastwood to tell us what those jobs mean. If they are to be created, the people who perform them must be paid. The increased income to pay for 75,000 jobs must come from somewhere, and I can only conclude that it will come from the profits or turnover generated by the increased consumption on licensed premises.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will tell us how much extra consumption will take place. If the new jobs are to be sustained, the cash for them must come from somewhere. It can only come from money paid over the bar, in cash or credit, for the increased consumption.

The Bill may have many more repercussions than are suggested in its long and short titles. If some of the increased consumption takes place towards the end of the day, common sense and experience suggest that that may have social implications.

I am sorry that the hon. and learned Member for Burton has left the Chamber, because I am about to quote the remarks that he made on 30 January. He said:

"Those of us who practise in the criminal courts know that most criminal drunks commit their acts of violence in or immediately after those last moments of drinking-up time at a late hour."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1987; Vol. 109, c. 643.]

That is not entirely news, but at least it comes from an authoritative source — the person who represents that constituency and who is involved in the courts.

If an extra half-hour is relatively easily obtainable, there will be quite a lot of consumption at the end of the day. Many of the effects of that increased consumption —an unspecified amount—are bound to be felt in that last half-hour. Whatever the closing time, there will be that period to which the hon. and learned Member for Burton referred. People will be there late at night when violence, alas, is more likely to occur. The Bill does not refer to any possibility that remedial measures will be taken in relation to alcohol consumption and crimes of violence. Any hon. Member, any other person and certainly the police know that there is a relationship between the two.

Unfortunately, we have all in our parliamentary and private lives come across the damaging relationship between over-consumption and acts of violence, criminal damage and offences against the person. That relationship is not quantified, but it exists. Not long ago, the whole country was staggered by an enormous act of violence in the Ealing vicarage case. One of the people involved was a former constituent, because I was the Member for Acton, which is now represented by the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). Those people tanked up on drink before the incident. I know that the consumption

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

took place not on licensed premises but in their home and, therefore, would be outside the scope of the Bill, but we know that it had that effect.

When I was the Member for Acton I was involved in a case, similar to cases with which all hon. Members are familiar of after-hours drinking. The publican wrongly allowed after-hours drinking and a murder occurred in the bar. I had on my hands the cases of two fatherless families —in one the person was dead and in the other the person who had perpetrated the crime had gone to prison —one widow and one virtual widow. We all know that the relationship between rapid consumption late at night and violence is strong. If any hon. Member does not agree, he should go to his local hospital's casualty unit.

Newham has some well-conducted clubs connected with political parties. The Labour and Conservative parties have well-conducted clubs which do not come into any of the categories about which I have spoken. But there are other places, and not long ago some people bleeding profusely arrived at Newham general hospital. Not long after, others who had been involved in the affray in that club arrived by motor car and the affray continued inside the casualty unit. Blood spurted on to the walls, equipment was smashed up and staff were terrified. We must admit that hospitals are places where violence is now much more frequent. It relates either to personal disputes while people are waiting to be dealt with or to alcohol-related violence of the sort that I have described.

The House would be wrong to give a Second Reading to a Bill which virtually permitted a universal—I shall give way to the hon. Member for Eastwood if he disagrees —extention of half an hour from 11 pm to 11.30 pm for licensed premises which applied for it.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Will my hon. Friend deal with two specific points? First, why should millions of decent, law-abiding people be prevented from social drinking on a wider scale simply because a relatively small proportion of criminals happen to be affected by drink? Secondly, his argument flies in the face of the example of Scotland, where the extension and relaxation of licensing laws has, according to the police, reduced crimes which are related to violence and drink.

Mr. Spearing: I shall deal with the Scottish point shortly. First, I shall deal with what my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) said about criminals. I suggest that, alas, a great deal of the difficulties between people which result in personal injury are not criminal in that people are professional or determined criminals. They probably happen as a result of personal arguments and difficulties which become criminal offences because there is damage to the person or property as a result of the altercation. In other words, I am talking not about habitual criminals, but people who are either convicted or charged with criminal behaviour in which alcohol plays a part. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley would agree that that is a well-established fact. To allow an extra half an hour, which would add to that risk, is something about which the House and the country must think clearly.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley asked fairly why the vast majority of people should have to forgo their freedom of an extra half an hour of comfortably dringing to protect people who may abuse that half an hour. That is the essence of his question. We may differ, but in view of the fact that alcohol is available—rightly or wrongly — relatively easily at off-licences or in a domestic environment, that is a price that many people would be willing to and probably should pay. After all, 11 pm is not early—it used to be much earlier than that—and a line must be drawn at some time. Anybody who has been involved in a motor accident, or who has been an innocent victim of somebody who has been tanked-up with alcohol, would agree with me that there should be some sort of social arrangement and that licensed hours should be limited within reasonable hours.

I differ from my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley and Conservative Members that that wide extension of licensing hours to 11.30 pm cannot but increase the amount of alcohol-related violence to the person and, alas, probably bad driving on our roads. That is an incontrovertible fact, of which the House should take note. For all these reasons we should pause before giving a Second Reading to the Bill. The relationships are clear.

The matter of Scotland was raised earlier in the debate. The statistics that were given need some comment. As I understand it, the statistics which have been used are those of drunken behaviour, or at least charges relating to drunken persons. As I understand it, other charges have increased, which may or may not be related to the consumption of alcohol. I have been told that the number of breach of the peace charges has increased by 16 per cent. and the number of petty assault charges has gone up by 20 per cent. I do not say that all or any of those charges were associated with alcohol, but a policeman charging a drunk involved in an incident in which a person was assaulted would probably charge the assailant with petty assault or breach of the peace rather than with being drunk. Therefore, I suggest that, although there may be some encouraging signs from the Scottish experience, it is not fully proven.

An hon. Member suggested in the previous debate that the police in Scotland approved of the change, but it turned out that they were happy because their work would be staggered over more hours and they would not have to deal with so many offences at the same time. That is a reasonable view for the police to hold, but I question whether it is a good answer in relation to the social context in which drink and violence must be placed.

I understand why the Bill has been proposed, but we must think carefully about the implications. The hon. Member for Eastwood has plucked out only one aspect of the matter. The repercussions cannot be known or discussed, though his speech suggests that the consumption of alcohol cannot but rise if the predictions about the employment effects are anywhere near correct, or even only 30 per cent. accurate.

The relationship between drink and violent crime, which we all deplore, is clear, and I do not believe that there is a sufficient case for giving the Bill a Second Reading.

1.42 pm

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): I had the good fortune a couple of years ago to take part in a television debate with police officers from Strathclyde who have to deal with a part of Britain whose people have the reputation of being among the heaviest drinkers. The most senior officer was asked whether he would want to revert to the old drinking

laws in Scotland and he answered emphatically that the number of cases of violent crime resulting directly from drinking in pubs had decreased.

There remains a problem about overall alcohol consumption, because drink is generally available in supermarkets and other such places, but the Bill proposes only that pubs and licensed premises should be allowed to operate more flexibly.

There is undoubtedly a substantial anomaly in the law in England and Wales. The law was introduced during the first world war and licensing laws have moved on in other areas. It is not fair that tenants and managers of licensed premises should be restricted in ways that other people are not.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) referred to crimes that may have resulted from drinking, but he was unable to confirm that the drink was consumed on licensed premises. There is a strong argument for saying that people in pubs drink in more controlled circumstances than do those who drink in other public areas or in their own homes.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman accepts what I said about drink bought in supermarkets; perhaps we are wrong to allow it to be so readily available in such places. However, the hon. Gentleman must accept that, although it is not possible to quantify the issue, everyone—and particularly women—knows to watch for the time that the pubs turn out. That has been the case for years and in some premises, not necessarily the majority, there is a significant connection between turning-out time and what happens afterwards. If the hon. Gentleman denies that fact, he should go along to his local hospital and see what happens.

Mr. Hayward: I do not deny it; I am aware of the problems. However, drinking establishments in Scotland are now much more civilised places than they were before the amendment of the Scottish licensing laws. The evolution in behaviour during the late-evening swill that we have seen there way well apply in England and Wales. At present the pressure is on the drinker to consume his drink by drinking-up time. Anyone who has visited a number of pubs recently will have seen large rounds being bought, which must be consumed by a specific time—which, in my part of the country, is normally 10.30 pm.

I was discussing restrictions as they apply to a number of locations. I am particularly concerned about sports clubs and other clubs with limited licences. Such clubs regularly have customers on only two or three nights a week. My constituency contains a number of rugby clubs —the Barton Hill and the Whitehall—and Cleve and Kingswood, among others, are just outside. The restrictions on those clubs are so heavy that often, when a rugby game finishes, they are not allowed to serve beer immediately; they must wait for half an hour or even an hour. The Bill will allow a degree of flexibility, which I consider appropriate.

One of my local newspapers, the *Kingswood Observer*, did a survey of attitudes towards drink. In my area, where non-conformism is very strong, a good many questions are raised. It would be reasonable to expect that such an area would be the most opposed to a change in the licensing laws, and it was therefore significant that more than two thirds of those asked were willing to see more flexibility. That is a reflection of the views about the need for change.

I have substantial experience of treatment of, and involvement with, alcoholics and others in need of treatment because of their addiction to alcohol. I do not speak with a personal or vested interest, but I have seen both sides of the issue. I believe that there is a need for change. However, I have seen the impact of excessive alcohol consumption on the individual. I do not consider that extending the licensing hours in the premises identified in the Bill will exacerbate the problem, because I believe that the problem of alcohol abuse is outside those areas.

1.47 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): As a supporter of this simple Bill, let me express my complete support for it. When I was a licensing magistrate, 30-odd years ago, I used to think of the rigmarole that would have to be undertaken before a modest extension of licensing hours —perhaps half an hour—could be obtained. The Bill will save numerous man hours for licensing magistrates, and we must remember that is does not seek to extend the total hours of consumption.

In the north-east—where you and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have our constituencies—there seems to be no widespread opposition to the proposals. It is felt that they would particularly benefit the few industrial areas that have not been decimated. The variation in licensing hours would probably be for a certain period—say a year—and the licencee would then have to apply to vary them. That would suit the licensing magistrates, and it would certainly suit those in the areas where we have only one growth industry, namely, tourism: I can recommend the northernmost counties for tourism.

The variation would have some impact on jobs and on the violence mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). I was beginning to become distressed at the thought that my hon. Friend lived in the most violent part of the United Kingdom, but I am sure that it is not that bad in Newham. No doubt the people of Newham, when they read his speech, will be somewhat alarmed, but I trust that he will allay their fears.

I want the Bill to get its Second Reading and to make progress. We have tried, but failed, to achieve such a measure before. Sooner or later, even if this Bill makes no progress, I am sure that this modest variation in licensing laws will be accepted.

1.50 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): As always when I speak on licensing matters, I declare my interest as a multiple licensee and the operator of five public houses in London. It is important to put that on the record.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) correctly made much of the importance of regulation. I have been a licensee for 15 years and been responsible for upholding the licensing laws in the most regulated place where one can to go to drink—the public house. There is little drunkeness in the pubs these days, and I am glad about that, as are my managers and staff.

It is tempting to repeat the arguments expressed in our debate on 27 February, when we discussed the excellent motion moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks). That motion sought to twin the two issues of licensing reform and the abuse of alcohol. We

[Mr. James Couchman]

enjoyed the debate in which both halves of the equation were discussed without the pressure of a legislative proposal.

On the same day, a modest measure, initiated by Lord Montgommery, was introduced to allow people to enjoy a drink with a late lunch or early supper in a bona fide restaurant during the afternoon break. All the stages of that Bill were completed on that occasion. I believe that that measure has added to the anomalies that prevail in licensing.

The Licensing (Amendment) Bill seeks in a sensible way to iron out some of the anomalies between pubs, restaurants and hotels, and between the law as it applies to Scotland and as it applies to England and Wales. I think that the changes proposed are sensible.

I shall give a brief example of why I think that the changes are important. Two of the pubs of which I am licensee and tenant are within 600 yds of each other in the City of Westminster, close to the House. One does its business at lunchtime rather than in the evening and at the weekend. The other pub does its main trade in the evening and at the weekend. Both pubs are obliged to be open at precisely the same hours, even though that does not allow the most sensible use of the hours available. I do not want to extend the opening hours for those public houses, but I should like the flexibility to open at hours that suit the custom available.

The City of London is an extreme example. No one is around after about 7.30 pm, yet public houses in the City of London are obliged to open at the same hours as pubs in surburban residential areas. That makes no sense.

Not many licensees will choose to extend their opening hours significantly. There might be a tendency to look for an extra half hour on Friday or Saturday, when more people are out and about and would like to drink a little later. From Monday to Thursday there will be little call for longer opening hours.

There is an anomaly between the law for public houses and for off-licences. Off-licences are able to open from 9 am until the terminal hour for public houses without any mandatory break. Off-licences enjoy much longer hours and are much less controlled. The time is long since past when that anomaly should be set aside.

There was talk of the brewers exerting pressure on tenant licensees and managers to open for all the hours that will be available as a result of the Bill. I believe that the problem has been sorted out. I believe that the Brewers Society, the National Licensed Victuallers Association and the National Association of Licensed House Managers will be able to agree the matter in a sensible and proper manner.

The hon. Member for Newham, South was slightly disparaging about the employment that could be created as a result of my hon. Friend's Bill. Already some pubs are open during non-licensed hours for the sale of things other than alcohol. Some pubs in London open for breakfast. In the afternoons, some people might like the opportunity to go into a pub, not necessarily for an alcoholic drink, but to enjoy the ambience and the appointment of the public house and to have afternoon tea. If there is an extended use of those expensive facilities throughout the land, there will be a need to run a second shift of workers. It is that second shift that will result in the additional employment that has been suggested by the supporters of the Bill.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak, and I support my hon. Friend's Bill.

1.57 pm

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I wish to intervene briefly in this debate, because the question of Scotland has arisen constantly in these deliberations. At the risk of sounding exceptionally pompous and conceited, may I say that it is a subject that I have been concerned about as a magistrate and as a member of the licensing court in the city of Glasgow for many years. Therefore, as the Scottish experience is of consequence to our deliberations today, I hope that the minute contribution that I shall make will assist hon. Members to make up their minds one way or another.

Before I came to the House I was a magistrate in the city of Glasgow and a member of the licensing court and a town councillor for 12 years. As a result of my experience, my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), then Secretary of State for Scotland, and I decided to introduce a Bill on licensing. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) referred to that Act.

If I have a quarrel with the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and his hon. Friends, it is that I would have preferred the measure to deal with the problem throughout the whole of the United Kingdom. Precisely the same rules and regulations for England, Wales and Scotland should be introduced at the same time. There should be no messing about. This is one kingdom and we should have one set of rules and regulations.

When my right hon. Friend and I introduced our Bill, we did not ask the Whips to put any pressure on our colleagues. We had many free votes. As a representative of a working-class area since 1952, either on the town council or in Parliament, I can truthfully say that that Bill made a substantial improvement to the position in Scotland.

I appreciate the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South about the rise in crimes that he foresees as a result of this measure being passed by the House. However, there are two types of crime—crime of violence and social crime. My hon. Friend referred to crimes of violence, but I can tell him that in Scotland there has not been much of an increase in such crime, if any. Moreover, there has been a massive decrease in social crime.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Eastwood and other Scottish colleagues will recall that when our licensing laws were tight with regard to opening hours, one would see men coming out of the large public works with their pay packets in their hands on a Friday night at half past five and, because of the limitation in drinking time, instead of going home, making straight for the public house.

Most of them—99·9 per cent.—were sensible. They would have a social drink with their friends and go home, but the hon. Member for Eastwood and I know that many were not sensible and would sit there and drink away their whole pay packet before 9 o'clock. It was a matter of, "Get as much drink into you as you can." I need not remind my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South that our drinking habits in Scotland are slightly different from those in England. Whereas in England beer is regarded as the most refreshing of all drinks, in Scotland the water of life is a harsher brand. So the half and a half pint syndrome can be expensive and sometimes explosive.

I can recall, as a magistrate, sitting in court on a Monday morning and having to deal with men who had gone home with hardly a penny of their pay packet left and sometimes beaten up their wives. That is as much a crime as those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South.

Mr. Spearing: Perhaps my right hon. Friend can tell the House a little more of his experience. As he will know, I was concerned about the other end of the day. Can he tell the House what happened between 11 pm and 11.30 pm, before the change and subsequently, according to his experience in Glasgow and what he has heard? Would the same provisions apply to England, with the almost automatic extension of half an hour? My right hon. Friend emphasised the great differences in social habits and expectations between the two areas.

Mr. MacKenzie: I can only add that the increase in drinking hours, or, to put it more precisely, the spread over the number of hours allowed for drinking, has assisted in Scotland. It has been a positive change. Perhaps the hon. Member for Eastwood has the figures more readily to hand than I have, but so far as I can see, from my contact with chief constables and police forces, and from my experience as a magistrate, the change has considerably helped working people in Scotland. That is what I hope this bill is all about.

In a sense, licensing hours in Scotland were peculiar. If one was a working man who went to a pub, one could drink only until a certain time, but if the person was a wee bit wealthier, he could go into a hotel and sit there and drink until the Lord called him. That shows the social division.

The only point that I want to make as a magistrate and a former member of the licensing court, having watched what has happened in my constituency and others, is that there has been a considerable improvement in Scotland for working people and their families since my right hon. Friend the Member for Govan and I introduced the Bill some years back, and I commend the Bill before us to the House.

2.3 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the House.

I should like to reply briefly to the debate. I thank the supporters of the Bill, on both sides of the House, who have supported it and spoken in favour of it in the two debates, I thank particularly my hon. Friends the Members for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) and for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), and the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), who spoke with such personal authority as the Minister of State involved when the licensing changes in Scotland were made.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) may find it surprising that I agreed with the great bulk of what he said. I hope by the force of argument, to persuade him to join us on the Committee rather than force a Division today, although we are all aware that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has been waiting patiently to speak. We hope that he will have the opportunity at least to speak on his Bill.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks and his kind invitation, but can he enlighten the House on one matter? There are two elements to his Bill. The first is essentially one of flexibility, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) referred. I concentrated on the second, which is of specific concern. It was about near or largely automatic extension. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those are two separate aspects, although they may be linked in the Bill, which should be examined later on their separate merits?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman is right. We shall consider the individual aspects of the Bill in Committee.

I thank the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), who spoke forcefully on behalf of the north-east. I wish to emphasise that the Bill has all-party support. The hon. Member for Wallsend asked how many licensed premises would take up the variation orders. It is difficult to be absolute in making a forecast. I expect that some would and some would not. Some would perhaps take up the option in the summer in tourist areas and not at other times of the year. Managers are content with the Bill.

Questions have been asked about employment implications. The Scottish evidence is that one third of the pubs in Scotland employ one extra member of staff as a result of the flexibility that now prevails. The main concern of the hon. Member for Wallsend was the implication for crime. He spoke also about automaticity.

Practical experience has been gained in Scotland, and recently at a meeting in my constituency I spoke to some policemen who have real practical experience. During the meeting a constituent asked the local police what Governments have done in the past few years that have helped the police. Without prompting, the officer who replied referred to the Act that the right hon. Member for Rutherglen, with the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), brought on to the statue book. The officer said that it was one of the best things that Governments have done to help the police in recent years in Scotland.

I emphasise that there is no automaticity about the variation orders. I stress the importance of subsection (3), which states:

"licensing justices shall not make a variation order unless satisfied that it is desirable to do so having regard to the social circumstances . . . or to activities taking place in, the locality in which the premises are situated."

The orders would apply for only one year and complaints could be made by the police, for example, to the magistrates court. They could seek to have the variation orders stopped if there were substantial objections.

We are not talking about a free-for-all—not that the hon. Member for Newham, South implied that we were —and we are not talking about universal extension. Instead, we are discussing a modest and controlled measure of increased flexibility.

The most important argument in favour of the Bill is one that has been advanced by a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is directed to the importance of the role of a pub or club. I should emphasise that the club movement fully supports the Bill. It is important that controlled premises are provided for the consumption of

[Mr. Stewart]

alcohol. There is a serious problem of alcohol abuse, and part of it can be attributed to consumption of liquor that is purchased at off-licences. When this is done, the liquor can be consumed anywhere. Controlled premises have an important social role and are an important feature of this modest Bill. I hope that I have persuaded the hon. Member for Newham, South to become a member of the Committee that considers the Bill, if he so wishes.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Parental Leave Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.9 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am pleased that, despite the long list of private Members' Bills on the Order Paper—some of them quite contentious — the House has reached the Second Reading of my Bill. I am also pleased to have the opportunity again to put to the House the case for parental leave. I advanced the detailed case under the ten minutes rule on 11 February, and, in view of the time, I shall not repeat all the details because I want particularly to hear the Minister's response. I hope that it will be positive, that he will recognise the enormous value of parental leave, and at least accept it in principle. After all, 10 of the 12 Common Market countries have some sort of parental leave provision.

The EEC issued a draft directive for member countries to bring parental leave into effect. Until now the Government have blocked the implementation of that draft directive in this country. Britain is virtually the odd man out in denying working fathers leave for child care. Working mothers would also be big gainers from these parental leave provisions.

The Bill's eligibility criteria by which people could receive parental leave entitlement would be met by the parent of a child under two years of age, the parent of a disabled child under five, and the parent of a child under five if the child has been adopted. Within a two-year period, the entitlement would be 13 weeks for each parent, if both are in full-time employment. That 13-week period would not be transferable; each parent would be entitled to 13 weeks. If that employee were a single parent the net entitlement would be 26 weeks. That provision is vital. I would also allow four weeks for an employed parent, if the other parent is not eligible—for example, if he or she is unemployed. The Bill would help part-time workers on a pro rata basis. It gives them the right to return to the same, or similar, work after an absence for child care. That provision is also important.

The benefits for individual working parents are enormous. I shall not repeat the list that I gave on 11 February, but I shall explain those benefits briefly. The Bill would improve equal opportunities for women in employment and it would help to overcome the damaging discontinuity of employment that is suffered by women after childbirth. I should like to give the House three facts about that. First, the average woman with two children spends seven years out of the labour force because there are no options for returning to work. Parental leave would give women that opportunity, and at least help in that respect. Secondly, it is estimated that a women loses about £135,000 during her working life because of loss of employment. Thirdly, Britain has one of the lowest employment rates for women with children. Our rate is much lower than the rates comparable countries.

Parental leave also helps the fairer distribution of responsibilities for child care between the parents and improves family and child welfare. That is vital. We are approaching a general election in which, I am sure, the family will be on the agenda. Parental leave helps the family. We all know of the increasing problems of child

abuse. Parental leave recognises the father's role in and responsibility for child care, and it would help fathers to fulfil those responsibilities by giving them rights.

I know that the Government have claimed that this parental leave scheme would hurt employers. However, that is not the case, because at the moment employers lose many of the skills that women bring to employment and which they could bring back to their place of work after child care. The cost of losing those skills which could otherwise be retained is not inconsiderable; in fact, a substantial amount of money is involved.

Furthermore, fewer than 700,000 babies are born in this country every year. Not all of the parents are employed. Therefore, they would not be eligible, or would not take up their rights. If one sets those 700,000 parents against the total working population, one realises that the eligibility level would be quite small.

In 1982, the Policy Studies Institute reported to the Government on the maternity leave provisions that were introduced by the Employment Protection Act 1975 and stated that there was

"remarkably little impact on employers relative to all the other influences upon them."

It would be the same for family leave provision.

I understand that small businesses may have problems, but the Bill provides for the Treasury either to share the cost with the employer or to take it on for small businesses. The Common Market scheme costs between £31 million and £45 million. I admit that my Bill would cost more because it is better, but it would be well below 0·1 per cent. of our total wages and salaries bill. The cost would be well worth the advantages. Indeed, our competitors are introducing parental leave because they see those advantages.

Since I introduced the Bill there has been little publicity, but already there has been widespread support. Many local authorities and Civil Service unions support it. The Maternity Alliance, to which many organisations are affiliated, also supports and has been a principal backer of the Bill. Only recently the National Council for One Parent Families has sent a letter to many Members of Parliament urging them to support the Bill.

I understand that the Government may disagree with the details of the Bill, but I urge them to support Second Reading today and to sort out those details in Committee. Let us get on a par with other European countries and bring some of those benefits for working parents into operation. Whatever happens today, statutory parental leave will inevitably come to Britain. I urge the Government to let it take this first step today.

2.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on introducing the Bill. I cannot commend it to the House, but he has raised a subject of importance and I am pleased to have this opportunity to give the Government's response to it.

I am a little surprised that so few Labour Members are present.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Name them.

Mr. Hogg: I heard a voice below the Gangway, but I am not in the least bit disposed to name that hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Leyton told the House that the measure had the warm-hearted support of trade unions and others. Obviously, no Labour Members are sponsored by the unions in question. As I look across the Chamber I ask myself where those sponsored hon. Members are to support the Bill that their unions are so keen to have on the statute book. I ask myself whether the unions in question are getting their money' worth. There are more Conservative Members present, so perhaps the unions would do well to consider whether they should sponsor some of us.

It is perhaps desirable to put the Bill in its proper context. The hon. Gentleman told us about the Bill's detail, so perhaps he will forgive me if I do not go through it clause by clause. Nevertheless, we need to know something about its genesis. The Bill is based on proposals originally contained in a draft European Community directive. It states that there will be at least three months' parental leave for each parent consequential on the birth or adoption of a child. It was contemplated that leave would normally be taken within the first two years of the child's life. But the draft directive made provision for special procedures to be laid down in the case of adopted or handicapped children. I think that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would agree that that is at least an understandable approach.

The draft directive was first published in 1983. There was then the kind of process of consultation and discussion with which the House is familiar. As a consequence, the draft directive was revised in 1984. Again, following that process, there was discussion within the European Community, but unfortunately it proved to be impossible to come to a unanimous conclusion. In Decemer 1985, there was a meeting of the Social Affairs Council. My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General suggested that the proposal be considered by the Commission's new unit to assess the impact of new regulations on small and medium-sized businesses. My right hon. and learned Friend was manifestly right to direct the attention of the European Community to an important consideration—namely, the cost burden that a proposal of this kind imposes on small business. I shall refer in a moment to the detailed provisions.

The Labour party and the hon. Member for Leyton, who does his best, are somewhat cavalier about the interests and burdens of small business. The Labour party and the hon. Member for Leyton do not appear to grasp the financial and practical burdens that a proposal of this kind might impose on small businesses. Of course, that is a massive divide between the parties. Conservative Members place great emphasis on the generation of wealth.

Mr. Sedgemore: Profit before care.

Mr. Hogg: If the hon. Gentleman is not careful, I shall have a few words to say about him as well. He has never shown any desire to have regard to the special interests of small businesses.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way in a moment.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) will find that he will lose his seat, as he has done previously.

Mr. Gale: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the burden that such a scheme might place upon small

[Mr. Gale]

business. I also have sympathy for the principle involved. Does my hon. Friend agree that the sort of scheme that has been introduced in some countries on the continent, which are unfunded but give a right to leave as opposed to paid leave, might be worth considering?

Mr. Hogg: Such matters are for consideration by the Government. The Government's broad view on the matter is that such points should be negotiated between employers and employees. The fundamental difference between the attitude of the Government and of the Labour party on this matter is that the Labour party wishes to impose upon industry and small business——

Mr. Sedgemore: Decent standards.

Mr. Hogg: Let the hon. Gentleman consider what the consequences are. As there are only three Opposition Members in the Chamber, they can hardly be said to be here. The alliance is wholly absent, as it has been for the greater part of this and previous debates. The Labour party, which would put industry into a straitjacket—a rigid formula—believes that that will not have adverse consequences. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch laughs.

Mr. Sedgemore: The hon. Gentleman is a joke.

Mr. Hogg: I am glad that I am pleasing the hon. Gentleman. Let him look at the consequences of his action.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross) *rose——*

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way to my hon. and learned Friend in a moment.

Let the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch look at the consequences of his action. We are dealing with small businesses.

Mr. Sedgemore: Slovenly country.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman said, "Slovenly country." If his policies were given statutory expression, an enormous burden would be imposed upon those who are active in the creation of wealth and new jobs.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am disturbed by the terms of the Bill and I wonder whether my hon. Friend can help me. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) said that the Conservative party believes in profits before care. I thought that care was paid for out of profits. What is caring about a parent who decides, on the basis of the Bill, to neglect his two-year-old child for 39 weeks of the year and then to take a fully paid holiday for 13 weeks of the year to look after it?

Mr. Cohen *rose——*

Mr. Hogg: As I should have expected, my hon. and learned Friend has made an extremely perceptive criticism of the Bill. He is wholly right. When criticism of that kind is taken into account, together with the resource implications——

Mr. Sedgemore: Only a mindless moron would put it that way.

Mr. Hogg: That is not a very constructive comment to make in a debate of this kind. That is why the Labour party is falling into disrepute. If all that the hon. Gentleman can do is to refer to my hon. and learned Friend in those terms, it means that the Labour party is not doing either itself or the issue justice.

Mr. Cohen *rose——*

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member for Leyton has been popping up and down, so of course I shall let him intervene.

Mr. Cohen: A large part of the Minister's response has been devoted to the burdens that will be placed on small businesses. Does he agree that my Bill provides for the Treasury to lift the burden off small businesses, which would lead to care being given without small businesses being hurt?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman blames me for concentrating on small businesses. I am concentrating on them for two reasons. First, they matter. Secondly, his hon. Friend below the Gangway, the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, suggested that the Bill would not impose a burden on small businesses. If his hon. Friend below the Gangway had kept his mouth shut and concentrated on matters that are clearly important, I should not have spent so much time on that part of the Bill.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: Of course I shall give way to my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Fairbairn: If I am a moron, surely the Bill would make more sense if my parents were to be paid by their employers so that they could look after me for 52 weeks of the year. A remark of that kind, coming from the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch, who is one of the principal proctalgics in this place, seems to demonstrate that he cares for nothing — far less for reason.

Mr. Hogg: I agree entirely with my hon. and learned Friend, subject only to this caveat and proviso: that even my hon. and learned Friend's parents might recoil from the prospect of supporting him, or even entertaining him, for 52 weeks of the year.

Mr. Sedgemore: My father is dead.

Mr. Fairbairn: So is mine.

Mr. Hogg: Dear, oh dear. I am very sorry that we are hearing about all these domestic details. If the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch thinks that that was a constructive intervention, that is a matter for him, but I think that the rest of the House will form an adverse view of what he said.

We have to form a view about this issue. The Government are not opposed to parental leave, but we are opposed to imposing it on industry by methods that are bound to cause very substantial on-costs. We should like there to be consultation between employers and employees and we should like voluntary agreements to be entered into. To that extent I agree with the hon. Member for Leyton, but this Government will not impose substantial additional burdens on the small business sector. We attach great importance to the prosperity of that sector. The Bill would put that prosperity at substantial risk.

2.28 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill and I

congratualte the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on introducing it. In an earlier intervention from a sedentary position the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) shouted, "Name them", referring to those Opposition Members who are here to take part in the debate. We should put his name on the record for a start. We should also put on record the names of the hon. Members for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster), the Opposition Chief Whip, and for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), who was here earlier. However, those who sit on the Liberal and Social Democratic party Benches, as well as Members of the other parties, so-called, are noticeably absent, as usual.

In his reply to the speech of the hon. Member for Leyton, my hon. Friend the Minister emphasised the additional burden that he felt this measure would impose on small businesses.

I should like to draw attention to one branch of small business — agriculture — in which I must declare an interest as a farmer. I have some knowledge of the effects of what is proposed in the Bill. I employ approximately 15 people on my farm and, as a result of the enormous progress that British farming has made over the last 10 years in increasing its productivity, there are no laggards around. Everybody is doing a vital and important job, is full-time employed and working considerable overtime.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 24 April.

DRUG COMPANIES (ACCOUNTS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 April.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT (PROTECTION OF BIRDS) (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 April.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am a well-known supporter of the North Atlantic Alliance. Allies need to co-operate with one another in many ways. They need to co-operate on the battlefield and in the preparation of their munitions and equipment. That co-operation is an important part of the Alliance. Facing us are the Warsaw pact countries which are dominated by the Soviet Union. A large measure of interoperability exists between the countries in the Warsaw pact in terms of equipment. Indeed, their interoperability is total and we cannot neglect this aspect of our defence.

When we have to decide what equipment to use, the choice initially depends on market forces within the Alliance. The companies that produce the equipment must carry out a large amount of research and production, and the Government have embarked upon a major exercise in cost cutting to ensure that the taxpayer gets good value for money. Neither the suppliers nor the services and certainly not the taxpayer would object to that. It is important that the matter is dealt with fairly and reasonably.

I think that my hon. Friend the Minister knows that I am anxious about the two-way street — that is to say, the sale and passage of equipment from the United States of America to Britain. We know that for many years a flood of equipment was purchased by the British taxpayers for our defence and, at the same time, we were selling only a small trickle of equipment to the United States. This has gone on for many years. However, I am delighted to find that the Government have been making strenuous efforts, with the assistance of Mr. Peter Levene and others, to redress the balance. There is still a long way to go before we can acknowledge that that is a reality.

In any alliance one must expect fairness and even-handedness between the partners. I am not suggesting that the United States of America should purchase all its equipment overseas, but it should be prepared to purchase a proportion of its equipment equivalent to the amount that it sells overseas. My sole criticism of the Trident programme is that we did not enter into a direct offset arrangement when the contract was agreed. I advocated that at the time, so Ministers will be well aware of that need. I greatly regret that we did not make that demand then. It would have been particularly helpful to us in subsequent negotiations, and it would have had a marked effect on negotiations on the contract for the multiple subscriber equipment that the United States decided to pruchase from overseas. In the end, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, for some extraordinary reason the United States chose outdated analogue equipment because of its price, not because of the quality of the equipment.

Why was the price so high? The competing companies in the United States were required to have a local partner. In the case of at least one British contestant, the difference between the bid that was accepted and the bid that the British company made was greater than the total cost of the equipment that it was to manufacture and supply.

In a true alliance, one should expect to work on equal terms. It is wrong for the United States to force United Kingdom suppliers to choose a local American contractor as a partner, unless we do the same. I understand that we

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

rarely require United States contractors to accept a local partner here for any of the equipment that they supply, and I do not think that the United States should impose such conditions either.

In the case that I have me tioned, the contract was lost. The French, who had tie up the deal with another contractor in the United St tes, were able to undercut it, but the technology that they supplied was outdated at the time of purchase and will g ow progressively more so. It was 100 per cent. analo ue equipment, whereas the Ptarmigan alternative is 80 per cent. digital and 20 per cent. analogue. That is the ext development in the area.

The problem is likely o get worse because of the enormous purchasing pow r of the United States. The Americans are now in th process of choosing more extensive battlefield equipm nt. Initially, they are trying to do that by means of their o n local systems and through the operation of the single c annel ground airborne radio system—SINCGARS. Con pared with the most modern technology, that system is already outdated. The Americans have enormous resources and buying power. However, interoperability w ith the equipment used by the rest of NATO will not be o tained if United States forces have to take that equipmen , because the other services in the NATO Alliance will not be able to communicate directly and fully with the U ited States, unless they adopt its outdated technology th mselves.

Originally, SINCGARS was due to be introduced in 1990, but considerable sli page put that back to 1994. Because some pressure has been applied, it is now said that it may be ready by 1991. t is two or three years behind British equipment which has already been tested and is available because of resear h work carried out by various companies in Britain. It would be wrong if out-dated equipment were imposed o us, and thereby the British taxpayer.

A system called Raven has already been designed in Britain for the Australian forces. The Australian forces carried out considerable r search to establish what they should buy to bring their forces up to date and into the 21st century. Following ma ny trials, they decided to adopt a Plessey system based on the Plessey System 4000 as the basis for Raven. Raven is far advanced beyond the out-dated SINCGARS. We sh ould ask why.

The specification given by the American Government was relatively modest. They required the equipment merely to channel-hop so that it would be difficult for an enemy to pick up signa ls. By channel-hopping, it is possible to disguise me sages being transmitted and thereby avoid much enco ding and decoding, and to give a much clearer aspect of the battlefield.

The Plessey equipmen t has the advantage of many additional features, inclu ding maintenance sub-systems, frequency management facilities, freqùency hopping, encryption abilities, null steering antenae, interference cancellation systems, bu rst transmissions and spread spectrum techniques, usi ng low data rates. All those additional advantages ha ve been built in to the Raven system and were not part of the specification for SINCGARS, which had a relatively low specification.

I understand that the United States has a requirement that the equipment shoul be capable of operating before breakdown on average f r 1,200 hours. The best it has managed to reach so far on its limited equipment is 400 hours. The United States is now talking about the possibility of reaching 800 hours. The specification for Raven is more than 2,000 hours — a significant improvement. All those points show that we should make strong representations within the Alliance to ensure that we are not sold off with some outdated system, purely because it is provided by the might of the United States, when we have something much better to offer.

I urge my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement to ensure that our employment potential is reached, that the taxpayers get good value for money and that the equipment is obtained in this country. We have an excellent record which is second to none. For us to accept anything less than the best when other countries in Asia and elsewhere, particularly Australia, are actively buying the equipment that is being produced here would be entirely and utterly wrong. Therefore, I urge my hon. Friend to use his influence with the United States of America to ensure that it realises the seriousness of the situation and that it is prepared to accept and play its part in a true partnership.

2.44 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): The House should be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) for raising this matter; and we look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

The interoperability of NATO is tied in with the two-way street. Almost every time that we speak on defence-related matters we pay a tribute to our United States allies because it keeps so many of its boys in Europe and it is the sheet anchor of NATO. However, it must start taking more of our European equipment. We must have more reality in the two-way street which, I am sure my hon. Friend would agree, ties in with the question of interoperability. I look forward to hearing from the Minister on the question on interoperability that my hon. Friend has raised, and perhaps he will also touch on the two-way street.

We have sold a certain amount of equipment to the United States of America over the years. The biggest triumph was selling 113 Harrier aircraft to the United States of America. We are something of a pillar in NATO, and also something of a bridge between the European members of NATO and the United States of America because of the special relationship that we have with it. It is important—despite the fact that we owe so much to the United States of America—that there should be a balance in buying equipment, especially when—bearing in mind the case that my hon. Friend cited—that which is available on this side of the Atlantic is better than that available from the United States.

2.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Archie Hamilton): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) for raising this important and complex subject of the interoperability of NATO communications, which has military as well as economic implications. The degree of interoperability that is required within and between our national headquarters, sea, land and air forces becomes a far more complicated matter when placed in the context of communications between NATO commanders and the

assigned mixed forces of the Alliance. Appropriate security protection is a further significant military consideration.

My hon. Friend referred to the fact that the Warsaw Pact has a high degree of interoperability which is not currently shared by the NATO allies. That is one of the advantages of a Communist system. A degree of uniformity can be imposed on allies, and one of the disadvantages of a more free market system is that everyone does his own thing. The desire and need to have interoperability is something that we fully recognise and are trying to implement.

Communication is not simply a voice and a telegraph. It is also increasingly data transfer and the linking of command and control information systems. The convergence of telecommunications and ADP technologies over the last few years have given us information technology. The House will appreciate that the governing factor affecting NATO's requirements for interoperability of communications is the need for allied formations and units to have the communications necessary to enable them to support and fight under the command of, or alongside, other formations and units, regardless of nationality. That ability gives the commanders the flexibility that is essential to the successful conduct of operations. National differences in the methods of exercising command, including organisational and staff procedures, must also be taken into account, together with difficulties that arise because of language differences.

The many considerations involved in communications interoperability are addressed within NATO under the council and defence planning committee, principally by the military committee and the NATO communications and information systems committee, and their supporting structures, in respect of military policy requirements and procedures; by the Conference of National Armament Directors and its supporting structure such as the armament groups and tri-service group in respect of standards, technologies, standardisation and collaborative opportunities, and by the Military Agency for Standardisation. These are the major forums. The Ministry of Defence pays an active part in all of them, with major support from industrial experts when appropriate. Our defence industry also plays its part in the NATO industrial advisory group advising the Conference of National Armament Directors.

NATO's strategic communications, those down to corps level, generally conform to CCITT — the Committee Communications Internationale Telegraphique et Telephonique — and CCIR (Radio) standards. The major NATO commanders' strategic communication requirements are normally funded from the NATO infrastructure budget. This means that common equipment is purchased and provided, such as those facilities comprising the NATO integrated communications system. Below corps level, tactical communications have been provided by the NATO nations for their own forces at national expense and that led to a variety of systems, some to different standards causing problems of interoperability.

Solutions to those problems for existing and future systems have been sought in NATO both through NATO standardisation agreements—STANAGS—which define standards to be adopted to improve interoperability and through a Eurogroup Defence Ministers initiative to develop European communication standards known as Eurocom standards. Outside of NATO, major support is also given by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Defence and industry to the work of the International Standards Organisation so that civil and military standards are harmonised to the maximum possible extent to the benefit of all.

The Alliance has embarked on a three-step programme for interoperability in tactical communications. The first step is for analogue interconnections between any two nations, and STANAG 5040 standards and tactical principals are employed permitting connection by interface equipment at specific interface detachments. The next step, for digital interoperability — the burden of manning liaison vehicles and supporting radio relay link vehicles — will be obviated by direct radio relay interconnection between communication nodes of allied forces. This interconnection, called the digital gateway, is described in STANAG 4206 series. The final step will lead to the fielding of tactical systems built to common standards. Work is under way, under the auspices of the NATO tri-service group on communications-electronics equipment — TSGCEE — on the development of an outline NATO staff target for communications in the land combat zone post the year 2000; an Eurocom is helping in that endeavour.

Development of such common standards will give a unique opportunity to British industry to get access to the wider market place offered by our allies and there is little doubt the industrial competition will be fierce.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South referred to Ptarmigan and Plessey, in his constituency, which has a big interest in the matter. I am sure he knows that Ptarmigan was initally deployed in 1984. It is a mobile, digital, area trunk communication system that will provide a secure, automatic switched network to support army and air tactical operations in north-west Europe. The system will handle command, control, air support and logistic information, providing communication by speech, facsimile, data and telegraph.

For the future, the NATO tri-service group on communications and electronic equipment and Eurocom are considering a programme of pre-feasibility studies in support of the outlined NATO staff target 2000. The United Kingdom is playing a leading part in this activity. It is now generally agreed that ONST 2000 will have to be implemented in an evolutionary way. With this in mind, it will be highly desirable for Ptarmigan's mid-life enhancements to be seen as a positive contribution to that goal.

In November 1985 it was announced that the consortium of Rockwell-Plessey had lost the bid for the supply of communication equipment to the United States army. Many people, including my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, were distressed about that. The winning bid was some $3 billion cheaper. Plessey bid only 20 per cent. of the total mobile subscriber equipment requirement, so no direct cost comparison is possible between Ptarmigan and the French RITA system, which formed part of the successful bid.

My hon. Friend mentioned that Plessey had been forced to find an American partner, and that the Americans often did not reciprocate by supplying equipment to us. Consideration must be given to that.

Plessey, and indeed the Government, were disappointed by the result, but it is likely that the company will gain

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

sales from Ptarmigan derivatives and associated future generations of area communication equipment such as its multirole system, which it has developed as a third-generation system using the same well-proven system concepts and taking advantage of updated technology. The new range of products consists of circuit, message and packet switches. The new equipment is able to provide a comparable performance to its predecessors, while offering the advantages of a dramatic reduction in size, weight, power consumption and cost. Improved modular concepts in hardware and software have also been incorporated, which increases the flexibility of the product and allows it to be progressively enhanced to support future C3I requirements. A number of overseas orders have been placed for defence communication projects incorporating multirole system switches.

My hon. Friend referred to the United Kingdom being somehow forced to buy SINCGARS. The United Kingdom is using Ptarmigan and Clansman, and there is no question of our buying SINCGARS. The Ministry is also exploring the use of frequency-hopping techniques in the battlefield.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) mentioned the two-way street and the strong desire that we should reciprocate all that is supplied by the United States. The latest figure is down to a ratio of 1·5:1, so we are down to a very low ratio. It has been more than 2:1.

That brings us to the question of international standards. In the strategic area, standards are largely based on the open systems interconnection reference model, which has been prepared by the International Standards Organisation. The Ministry of Defence has recently issued a statement of intent on support of standards for OSI. These standards are designed to allow the exchange of information between information systems regardless of manufacturer or geographical location.

It is important for suppliers of information technology systems to recognise that it is the MOD's intention to adopt ISO OSI standards as they become sufficiently mature, and towards this aim the MOD is funding work to enhance the military features. This policy relates specifically to non-operational and strategic operational IT systems. Tactical IT systems will be expected to comply with OSI standards as far as is practicable, but the tactical environment does not currently allow adherence to the full set of OSI standards. This statement of intent reflects the belief that that is the most effective way of ensuring the widest possible choice of products and suppliers, while at the same time ensuring that the MOD is able to achieve its overall aim of using IT effectively, and securing the best long-term value for money.

The first of a series of standard NATO agreements (STANAG) giving an overview of the NATO reference model for open systems interconnection was recently promulgated after ratification. Further agreements are expected within the course of the next year, and the United Kingdom is the lead nation in over 50 per cent. of these interoperability standards. The work has relied heavily on the general international activities being pursued via the Standards bodies in each NATO national capital, and on close and regular industrial Government discussions.

To demonstrate international progress, this month the United States Department of Defence has announced, in conjunction with their Government open systems interconnection programme, that future systems — including command and control—will have to install the complete range of ISO protocols in line with the NATO STANAG, although these will need augmenting for tactical systems. We are making progress on that front.

Turning now to the question of international competitive bidding for NATO infrastructure-funded contracts, every NATO nation which acts as the host nation is bound by the principles on which NATO international competitions are run. Those principles include the "Principle of Non Discrimination", which states that eligible firms from other NATO countries must be given no less opportunity to submit their bids than national firms, and that tenders submitted by such foreign firms must not be treated in a less favourable way than those of national competitors.

Should a specification issued by a host nation discriminate against other NATO nations' firms, the nations concerned can seek a review of the specification by the NATO international staff, to bring about amendments to the specification removing the discriminatory elements. British firms engaged in bidding for NATO infrastructure-funded contracts normally keep closely in touch with MOD officials and our national representatives in NATO to make sure that their rights under the principle of non-discrimination are upheld and they are given strong support when their complaint is justified.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this important matter. I hope——

The Motion having been made at half-past Two o'clock, and the debate having continued for half a hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing order.*

Adjourned at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 30 March 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Combined Heat and Power Schemes

2. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on progress in promoting combined heat and power schemes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I have had several representations about progress on lead city CHP schemes, including of course, questions from hon. Members.

Mr. Rost: Will my hon. Friend look urgently at the three problems still preventing private sector CHP from competing fairly with the public sector: a rating assessment that is equitable with public utilities, legislation that allows private utilities to have the same powers as public utilities and, above all, a fair price for electricity produced in the private sector? The Central Electricity Generating Board still pays 25 per cent. less for electricity than it charges the private sector for that same electricity, and the new tariffs are likely to reduce that still further.

Mr. Hunt: Yes. I will look again at all three of the points raised by my hon. Friend. The level of the bulk supply tariff is a matter for the CEGB, and responsibility for rating policy rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. However, I am in touch with my colleagues at the Department of the Environment on this matter. On the matter of legislation, one of the objectives of the lead city studies is to identify possible legislative requirements. The Government have commissioned a study to review and consider the adequacy of existing legislation and, in the light of the results of that study and those of the lead cities, the Government will consider the need for legislative or regulatory changes.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Minister accept that the cause for great public antipathy towards combined heat and power—individual metering for heat—has now been resolved and that metering expertise has managed to overcome the problem? In the light of that, will he consult further his right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of the Environment to find some way of encouraging local authorities to move down that road now that their inhibitions with regard to metering have been overcome?

Mr. Hunt: Metering is just one of the many aspects of CHP. I stress once again that the Government want CHP district heating to go ahead where it is economically viable. However, the Government consider that the main responsibility for taking CHPDH forward lies with the private sector.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I assure my hon. Friend that the Leicester combined heat and power consortium, now known as Leicester Energy Ltd., is raring to go. It believes that cheaper heat will be distributed by 1991. It needs only three years for construction and the contracts. Reducing the rates, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), is the only thing holding it up. May we please have as much support as possible?

Mr. Hunt: I compliment my hon. Friend and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) on their strong support for the Leicester CHP consortium. I was most encouraged by the fact that the consortium had agreed to form a heat utility company to take the project through to the next stage. I must pay tribute to my hon. Friends' contributions to that and to making Leicester an energy action city. I was delighted to see a special edition of the *Leicester Mercury* dealing with that.

Mr. Rowlands: Some time last year the Minister made a clear statment that we would have the rating assessment problems resolved. Time is now passing. Please may we have a commitment from the Minister that there will be a statement in the near future about the position of the rating assessments of CHP schemes?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to reassure the hon. Gentleman that the Government accept that CHP schemes should be rated on an equal footing with the rest of the electricity supply industry. Therefore, we have been considering, with colleagues at the Department of the Environment, whether an early statement can be made to clarify the practical implications for CHP operators of the Government's decision in principle.

Coal Imports

3. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of future trends of imports of coal for the remaining months of 1987.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Mr. Eadie: Surely the hon. Gentleman must agree that it is nonsense to import foreign coal in the light of the fact that we have plenty of coal of our own and since the miners in this country are breaking productivity records every week? The Minister must also be aware that much of the foreign coal coming into this country is very unfairly heavily subsidised.

Mr. Hunt: In 1979, when we inherited the coal industry from the Labour Government, the United Kingdom was a net importer of 2 million tonnes of coal every year. By 1983 we had converted that position and the United Kingdom was a net exporter of 2 million tonnes. Sadly, the strike destroyed that position. However, the best protection against imports for the United Kingdom coal industry lies in it achieving full production at prices that are competitive on the world market.

Mr. Hickmet: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the Government will take no steps to prevent the import of coal? May I also inform him that the jobs of more than 600 men in my constituency depend on the

import of coal? The constant attacks by Labour politicians aimed at banning coal imports would put a great many people in my constituency out of work.

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to assure my hon. Friend that there are no restrictions on coal imports. However, judging by the productivity figures coming from the pits in the United Kingdom, the miners and management of British Coal have nothing to fear from the future.

British Coal

4. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he or his fellow Ministers last met the chairman of British Coal; what were the issues discussed; and if he will make a statement.

8. **Mr. Ottway** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Coal Board; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Thompson: I am most grateful to the Secretary of State for his reply, although it was very brief. At the next meeting that the Secretary of State and his Ministers have with the chairman of British Coal, will they seek the chairman's views on the production of coal in the north-east of England relative to the possibility of establishing a new coal-fired power station in the area?

Mr. Walker: Most certainly. I discuss all the regional aspects. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is already a considerable demand for coal from existing industries in the north-east. I hope that that will continue.

Mr. Ottaway: My right hon. Friend will be aware that output at the Nottinghamshire coalfield reached an all-time high of 4·02 tonnes per man shift the other day and reached 5 tonnes per man shift in the Sherwood area. When my right hon. Friend has his discussions with the chairman of the Coal Board, will he suggest that the headquarters of the Coal Board are moved to the Nottinghamshire coalfield, as that is quite clearly where the future lies?

Mr. Walker: I endorse what my hon. Friend said about the remarkable production figures in north Nottinghamshire. The location of the headquarters of the Coal Board is a matter for the Coal Board. However, I know that the existing management is endeavouring to ensure that much of the existing management is devolved to the regions, where it would be thoroughly welcomed.

Mr. Hardy: Will the Secretary of State discuss with the chairman of British Coal how, as a result of the real achievements in productivity resulting from the closure of a lot of the capacity and of continuing investment, British customers can be persuaded to buy British coal rather that develop a dependency upon dumped coal from overseas or insecure supplies from South Africa? In addition, will he ask the chairman of British Coal to be quite buoyant in his assessment of the situation, not least because in my constituency in the Kilnhurst part of the Manvers complex, which a few months ago British Coal was talking about closing, records are currently being broken?

Mr. Walker: I know that the hon. Gentleman has a keen interest in the coal industry. He should reflect on an industry which now has 42 per cent. fewer people than it had prior to the commencement of the overtime ban before the strike and is producing 97 per cent. of the coal——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Government have put those men on the dole.

Mr. Walker: As for any suggestion that they have been put on the dole, I am glad to say that many took early retirement and not one suffered compulsory redundancy. If there is a hope for coal now it is because of this Government's actions.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Has the Secretary of State discussed with the chairman of British Coal the progress that British Coal Enterprise Ltd. is making in creating jobs in areas hit by coal mine closures? Can he assure the House that British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has sufficient resources to do the job?

Mr. Walker: Yes, I can assure the House that, not only does British Coal Enterprise Ltd. have the resources to do the job, but when it runs out of the existing resources, those will be increased. It is doing a marvellous job of work and I am pleased to tell the House that we have heard that it has provided its fifteen thousandth job since it started.

Mr. Orme: As the Secretary of State knows, the chairman of British Coal undertook to review the question of sacked miners. Has he discussed this with the chairman and has he anything to report to the House?

Mr. Walker: Yes, the matter was discussed recently and I am told that there will be an announcement shortly.

Coal-fired Power Stations

5. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received from the Central Electricity Generating Board regarding requests to build coal-fired power stations.

13. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has recently received any new applications from the Central Electricity Generating Board regarding construction of new coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Peter Walker: The chairman of the CEGB has informed me that the board has concentrated its investigation of possible locations for new coal-fired power stations on five sites which it owns. Subject to the satisfactory completion of site investigations and other work, the board expects to select West Burton and Fawley and to make formal applications for consent to these stations by the end of this year. My intention on receiving such applications would be to consider each decision as quickly as possible.

Mr. Ashton: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply. Is he aware that West Burton is in my constituency and that there will be no problems from the county or district council with regard to planning permission for a development that will be eagerly welcomed? As unemployment is now touching 20 per cent., is the right hon. Gentleman further aware that if he can speed up his decision and give it full force he will receive the maximum backing from the area?

Mr. Walker: I am pleased that the project will be of benefit to the area in terms of jobs and everything else. It

also reflects the availability of coal in the area, where all productivity records are being broken. I believe that the feasibility of coal-fired power stations has resulted from the massive improvement in productivity under this Government.

Mr. Hannam: Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of all who believe in a balanced energy programme? Is he aware that his announcement will be greatly welcomed by the hard-pressed power construction industry? Are there any proposals in the pipeline for a coal-fired power station in the far south-west of England?

Mr. Walker: On the latter point, I have received no application and I know of no immediate proposal by the CEGB, which has informed me of its likely choices for the first two stations. It has already announced its intention to go ahead with Sizewell and to apply for one further PWR, so I think that that is the programme for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Dormand: Does that exclude the possibility of a coal-fired power station in the north-east, which has the strongest case of all, in having higher unemployment than any other part of the United Kingdom except Northern Ireland? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that British Coal Enterprise Ltd. seems to be having no effect whatever in the north-east of England, and will he give some attention to that?

Mr. Walker: That is simply not true, as a substantial number of jobs have already been provided in the north-east. I referred to the siting of the first two power stations, but I did not say that the north-east was excluded for the future. The hon. Gentleman, with his great knowledge of the area, will know that orders for power stations, both nuclear and coal-fired, are of considerable benefit to the north-east.

Mr. Colvin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be relief in my constituency that he has plumped for one site in Waterside and not for two, although there is still considerable debate as to whether the Fawley B side or the Marchwood side is best? Is he aware that there will also be relief that it is to be a coal-fired station rather than a nuclear one? Will he, nevertheless, give an undertaking that there will be the fullest public debate before the final go-ahead is given, as there are other anxieties, first, about the future of the north Solent area of outstanding natural beauty, secondly, about sulphur dioxide emissions from coal-fired power stations and, thirdly, about the appalling infrastructure of Waterside, which for too long has been a dumping ground for developments in Hampshire that others did not want? Does my right hon. Friend accept that if the development is to get past the planning hurdles as smoothly as one trusts will be the case in Burton there must be some trade-off in terms of improving the infrastructure and in particular the killer A326 road?

Mr. Walker: I am aware of my hon. Friend's great interest in possible developments in his constituency and the CEGB is anxious to recognise the environmental issues that he has raised. I am sure that in their discussions the planning authorities will not be disappointed at the interest shown by the board in those issues.

Mr. Forth: Before my right hon. Friend rushes off to approve too many coal-fired power stations, will he bear in mind the problem of emissions and acid rain, which concerns people, not only in this country, but our partners abroad, especially in Europe? Will he bear in mind also the regrettably much higher fatality rate for those mining coal and using it in various ways, compared to nuclear power? Will he bear all those factors in mind before he considers approving too many coal-fired power stations?

Mr. Walker: Yes. My hon. Friend has raised two important issues. On his environmental point about acid rain, all new coal-fired power stations have the best equipment to ensure that such problems are met as far as possible. The accident and fatality rates in the coal industry are serious problems which everybody hopes to improve in the years to come.

Mr. Orme: We welcome the proposed development of these new coal-fired power stations, which are long overdue. However, to return to a point made earlier by some of my hon. Friends, can the Secretary of State give an undertaking that British coal will be used in these new stations?

Mr. Walker: Such power stations would probably not have been possible but for the improved performance of British Coal during the lifetime of this Government. Provided that performance continues, and is enhanced, I am sure that the CEGB will continue to buy the bulk of its coal from the British coal industry as it does at present. It is in its vested interest to do so, provided it remains a safe and secure form of supply.

Conservation Schemes

6. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received in the past six months about the adequacy of existing energy conservation schemes.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am announcing today a 33 per cent. increase in the administrative funding for community insulation projects from £296,000 to £391,000. Total funding will increase from £32 million in 1986-87 to £45 million in 1987-88, an increase of 41 per cent.

I hope that in the coming year 200,000 homes in the lower income groups will be insulated, and 8,000 jobs provided.

Mr. Knox: Can my right hon. Friend estimate the savings that will be effected by the improvements that he has announced?

Mr. Walker: No, I cannot, because of the diversity of housing concerned. However, we know that in the 300,000 houses that this programme has already tackled, there has been, not only a substantial improvement in cost savings to the families concerned, but a substantial improvement in their comfort. It is the combination of those effects, together with the jobs created, that makes the scheme so attractive.

Mr. Bruce: The Secretary of State is obviously anxious to put a good gloss on the record that he has achieved. However, does he acknowledge that that record falls a long way short of the 20 per cent. saving that he, his Department and the EEC predict can be achieved through energy conservation? What will he do to plug that gap?

Mr. Walker: This scheme has made a 3,000 per cent. improvement on the record of the Lib-Lab Government.

Mr. Hardy: While any improvement is to be welcomed, will the Secretary of State confirm that, even with that improvement, our position will still be by far the worst in western Europe?

Mr. Walker: Whereas our position became worse and worse under the previous Labour Government, it has become better and better under this Government.

Mr. Rost: What discussions has my right hon. Friend had with his colleagues in other Government Departments to ensure that the public sector, such as the Health Service, does a little more to cut public expenditure by improving energy efficiency?

Mr. Walker: I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has personally pursued a major campaign with the regional hospital boards to ensure that the colossal savings that can be obtained by them are achieved. Likewise, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Defence are doing the same in their Departments. Those are three areas of big energy usage and I am glad that there are signs that considerable improvements in their performance will be achieved.

Mr. Rowlands: Will the Government's proposals not reduce and remove grants from millions of householders who do not have effective or adequate standards of home insulation? Is the Secretary of State aware that, in another Government Department, the MSC is cutting some community programmes that will affect the viability of some of the community energy projects, on which the Government, and all of us, depend?

Mr. Walker: No. The time should come when, if there is a dramatic improvement in a programme with which hon. Members on both sides of the House agree, Opposition Members should pay tribute to it, instead of carping. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman goes back and looks at the appalling record of the Labour Government.

British Coal (Investment Programme)

7. **Mr. Ashby** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of Government support for the investment programme of British Coal since 1979-80; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Over £5,500 million has been invested in the coal industry since 1979.

Mr. Ashby: While I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, which shows the Government's commitment to the mining industry, including Asfordby, may I ask him whether he will give priority to the miners of the south Leicestershire coalfield — 99 per cent. of whom live in my constituency—for the jobs in the future development of Asfordby?

Mr. Hunt: I am pleased to assure my hon. Friend that the development at Asfordby is on schedule in terms of time and cost. I know how hard he and other hon. Friends have been lobbying on the future for the miners of south Leicestershire and I am pleased to tell him that the south midlands area management has assured me that such miners will have priority in transferring to Asfordby.

Mr. Janner: Can the Minister please say when pits other than Asfordby are expected to be opened, bearing in mind that the existing pits in Leicestershire are closing and the huge reservoir of extremely valuable and necessary coal in the Vale of Belvoir? Will it be before all the miners' skills have disappeared from those pits, which are emptying of people?

Mr. Hunt: I wish thatthe hon. and learned Gentleman would cease his negative attitude towards the future of the men in this area. There is a marvellous prospect at south Warwickshire and a tremendous development at Asfordby. Provided that the miners in the area continue the tremendous advances in productivity, their future is extremely bright.

British Coal Productivity

9. **Mr. Batiste** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the latest available productivity figures for British Coal.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to say that for the week ending 20 March average deep-mined revenue output per man shift was at the record level of 3·72 tonnes, compared with the provisional figure of 3·70 tonnes. Clearly this underlines the potential of our great coal industry.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that the constantly improving productivity record of British Coal is a vindication of the Government's policy of investment in the industry and of the miners' attitude in accepting responsible and flexible working practices to justify that investment? Does he further agree that the single greatest obstacle to the continued progress of the industry is the attitude and actions of the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, currently evidenced by his attacks on his members in south Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with a great deal of what my hon. Friend said. The Government are providing the investment needed to secure future productivity growth. I am pleased to say that we are now beginning a £2 billion further investment programme over the next three years, which is an important expression of confidence in the industry's ability to improve its productivity still further. As I have said previously, the only power left to the president of the NUM is control over the Opposition's energy policy.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does the Minister accept that productivity is calculated in many ways, including loss of manpower, and that the loss of 70,000 men has contributed to increased production? Is it not a fact that if he does not keep track of imports of coal and plans carefully, increasing productivity, the possibility of increased shift time and increased investment could lead to colliery closures?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman, too, is expressing a pessimistic view that flies in the face of the facts. Although manpower has been reduced in the coal industry, output has not, and that is a remarkable tribute to the achievements of the men. Productivity is measured by output per man shift, and that measurement showed that productivity fell each year between 1974 and 1979 under the Government whom he supported.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Can my hon. Friend relate productivity to capital investment? That is a measure of efficiency, without which a false impression may be gathered.

Mr. Hunt: The evidence is that a great deal of the increase in productivity is due to investment, particularly in heavy duty machinery for new coal faces. Of course I shall give my hon. Friend the information that he seeks.

Mrs. Clwyd: As south Wales had its highest ever level of productivity last week, will the Minister confirm that, if the Margam project were operational, £41 million would be saved in coking coal imports and £15 million in domestic coal imports? Therefore, will he give every encouragement to the Margam project and make sure that the necessary grants and loans are made available as soon as possible?

Mr. Hunt: I join the hon. Lady in congratulating south Wales miners on achieving an output per man shift of 3·29 tonnes. It is a remarkable achievement. Indeed, south Wales has demonstrated its confidence in the future by entering into discussions and agreeing six-day working at Margam. The line taken by the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming that decision is again in stark contrast to the line taken by the president of the NUM.

Sizewell B

11. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received since he announced his decision on the Sizewell B nuclear power station.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): My right hon. Friend and I have received 36 letters about Sizewell B following the announcement of his decision.

Mr. Pike: Notwithstanding that answer, does the Minister accept that there is widespread public concern about the safety aspects of PWRs? Many people are not convinced that the project is in the best energy interests of the country and also do not believe that the economic case is correct.

Mr. Goodlad: I regret to say that the hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. The decision has been broadly welcomed. The effect that he mentioned was not evident in our debate on nuclear power last week, when the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) was alone on the Labour Benches and made Horatio on the bridge look like a team player.

Mr. Adley: In view of my hon. Friend's interesting answer, does he agree that either the information provided by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike)—namely, that there is widespread public concern about Sizewell—is incorrect, or that concern is expressed only among the illiterate?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend, as always, has a point.

Mr. Beith: Does the Minister accept the view put forward by the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board that the Sizewell decision has opened the way to a family of PWRs, or does he accept the Layfield view that Sizewell presents an opportunity to test the claims made on behalf of PWRs?

Mr. Goodlad: As yet, my right hon. Friend has received no further applications. He will consider each one on its merits.

Electricity Supply (Privatisation)

12. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received in favour of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received a number of representations on this matter. The Government have no present plans to privatise the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Taylor: In view of the remarkable success of the privatisation of the gas industry and the benefits that have stemmed from it for the industry and the consumer, is there not a sound case for pressing ahead with the privatisation of the electricity industry as speedily as possible? Will the Minister consider the possibility, not of a blanket share issue, but of separate stock for separate area boards?

Mr. Walker: I agree with my hon. Friend. British Gas has been an outstanding success, as 5 million ordinary people are willing to validate, including many customers and virtually all the employees of British Gas. In any consideration of the future of the electricity supply industry one must consider the lessons to be learnt from British Gas.

Mr. Eadie: When considering any representations that are made to the Secretary of State regarding the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, will he assure the House that thermal nuclear power stations will not be operated by the private sector?

Mr. Walker: As we have no plans for privatisation, I have no comments to make on any details of such a scheme, should it take place in the future. I can only assure the hon. Gentleman that, we took great care and made a great success of British Gas, and we shall do the same in any future privatisation of any other industry.

Coal Industry (Productivity and Investment)

14. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will arrange to meet leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers to discuss productivity and investment in the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am always happy to meet the representatives of unions in the coal industry to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. In view of the widespread welcome that there appears to be on both sides of the House for the decision in south Wales, would it not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend to meet the NUM and to remind it of the fruits that can be available to it if it accepts new working practices? Does my right hon. Friend agree that no other Government could possibly have achieved the present situation unless the rule of terror practised by Mr. Arthur Scargill had been broken by the Government's persistence?

Mr. Walker: It is remarkable that the great majority of south Wales miners are in favour of the new project for a six-day week. The Leader of the Opposition has come out in support of them, the Welsh TUC also supports them, and seemingly the one great opponent is the president of the National Union of Mineworkers. I hope that the members of the NUM will put appropriate pressure on him.

Mr. Ashton: There is always support for new jobs, but is the Minister aware of the genuine fear that the high productivity now being achieved will mean no jobs for school leavers in coal mining areas, and that the continuing increase in output, plus nuclear power stations, the high price of electricity and giving pensioners only a £5 heating bonus means that ultimately there will be an energy mountain and mass unemployment, in the same way as there is a butter mountain—except that farmers get the subsidy?

Mr. Walker: Earlier, in relation to a question about whether a power station would be built in his constituency, the hon. Gentleman seemingly rejoiced at the jobs that would be created. He now suggests that we go back to colossal overmanning in the coal industry, which will make it totally non-competitive for such power stations.

Mr. Favell: Is my right hon. Friend concerned about the recent report, not only about the cost of British coal for producing energy and thereby the cost to industry, but about overmanning in the electricity supply industry?

Mr. Walker: It is not in the interests of any industry to continue with the practice of overmanning. The coal industry is a perfect example of where we have cut uneconomic pits and replaced them; and so far British Coal Enterprise Ltd., has provided 15,000 new jobs in expanding industries.

Nuclear Power

15. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the expenditure of public money by his Department on the promoting of nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend and I have received many representations about the importance of informing the public of the facts about the safety of nuclear power and its economic and strategic benefits.

Mr. Cohen: Why are the Government spending considerable amounts of public money on a PR hype for the nuclear industry, including jamborees to Sellafield involving the Flying Scotsman and the Workington brass band, when the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate is grossly under-staffed and under-funded? The Government have asked the CEGB to investigate itself at Hinkley Point, but it has failed to keep Sellafield safe and is miles behind in its 20-year review of Magnox nuclear stations.

Mr. Goodlad: Public confidence in nuclear power is vital and will be brought about only through the full knowledge of the true facts. To this end, successive Governments have funded a programme of public information through the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. The authority's task is to provide clear and accurate information on the nature and uses of civil nuclear power. The industry is sometimes wrongly castigated for being secretive. It is extremely unfair to blame that industry when it is being informative. I am satisfied that the NII is able to maintain safety standards in exercising its statutory role. There is absolutely no question of safety at our installations being prejudiced. The chief inspector has categorically stated that his priority is the safety of operating installations and that he has sufficient staff resources to discharge that essential aim.

Mr. Leigh: Is it not extraordinary that hardly a day passes in this Chamber when the Opposition parties do not whinge about the so-called decline in our manufacturing base, yet they do everything possible to oppose Britain becoming more competitive by opposing cheap nuclear energy that gives a competitive edge to our opponents, particularly to the French?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is correct. There is no consistency in the Opposition parties.

Mr. Orme: The Minister has just said that he wants to give as much information and to be as open as possible. Therefore, could he comment on the AGR accident at Hartlepool? Why has no statement been made so far by the Government, and can he tell us the cost of that accident to date?

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB has made a perfectly open statement about that. I shall certainly let the right hon. Gentleman know about the costs when they have been ascertained.

Coal Industry (Six-Day Working)

16. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with British Coal about the implications of an extension of six-day working in the industry for United Kingdom energy policy.

Mr. David Hunt: Any change in working practices in the coal industry is, of course, a matter for negotiation between British Coal and the mining unions concerned.

Mr. Stewart: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. I welcome the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy about the building of two new coal-fired power stations. Does my hon. Friend agree that the CEGB made its commitment to the coal industry because of the decision of the south Wales miners in accepting six-day coaling and the record productivity in Nottinghamshire, making electricity generation from coal more competitive than other energy sources?

Mr. Hunt: I welcome the positive approach by the south Wales NUM to British Coal's proposals for six-day coaling at Margam. My hon. Friend is right. The message coming loud and clear from the pits is that the men and management are prepared to work with this massive record investment by the Government and to produce these fantastic productivity figures.

THE ARTS

Museums (Visitors)

40. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received about possible initiatives to increase the number of people visiting museums.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): None, Sir, but on 17 December 1986 I announced details of a new arts marketing scheme to assist arts organisations, including publicly funded museums and galleries, to find ways of increasing attendances.

Mr. Haynes: The Minister has talked about initiatives for the arts, but he is not doing very well. Is he aware that the increased museum admission charges imposed by the Government are driving people away? Even children are

being charged £1 to go into a museum. It is time that the Government changed their mind and did something good for the people in respect of museums.

Mr. Luce: If not doing well is doubling the number of museums during the past 15 years, the hon. Gentleman should think again. The number of people attending our national museums and galleries is increasing all the time. I am satisfied that we are meeting public demand. As for charges for museum admission, I think that it is right that this matter should be left to the trustees. If the trustees judge that, by raising charges and by getting extra resources for the museums, they will improve facilities, which in turn will attract greater public interest, that is their choice. It is right that it should be their choice.

Mr. Rhodes James: Will my right hon. Friend deal at long last with the indefensible anomaly whereby five major university museums in England, Scotland and Wales, including the Fitzwilliam museum in Cambridge, are financed or semi-financed from the University Grants Committee budget? We have to turn away visitors because museums cannot open as often as we would wish. Are these not national museums? Will my right hon. Friend deal with this matter and with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science? Can we not end this indefensible anomaly?

Mr. Luce: I acknowledge the strength of my hon. Friend's feelings. He has raised this matter in debates and in questions. I have had the chance to visit a number of distinguished university museums, but principally this is, and has been for a long time, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Great importance is attached to museums being linked to the university, as opposed to a wider link.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that introducing charges for admission to museums is a retrograde step and certainly will not do anything to attract visitors to museums? Should not this policy be reversed? Should not people be given the freedom to go to museums free of charge, thereby widening knowledge and making the best possible use of the assets of our national museums?

Mr. Luce: I do not think that it is a retrograde step. If the trustees think that, by a voluntary donation system or by admission charges, over and above the basic grant which they receive, they will improve museum facilities, thereby benefiting the public, that is their choice. In the vast majority of countries, whatever their system of payment to the arts, there is a system of charging for entrance to museums and galleries. It is up to the trustees to decide.

Mr. Jessel: Has my right hon. Friend any information about which other countries charge for museum admission and about the effect on attendances?

Mr. Luce: It is interesting to note that charging occurs in a large number of countries, whatever their system—whether the bulk of their support for the arts is through the state system and the taxpayer or from the private sector. Those countries range from the United States to France and to a museum which I saw not long ago in East Berlin. There is widespread evidence that charging takes place all over the world.

Museum Charges

41. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Civil Service trade unions and associations to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

Mr. Luce: On 20 February 1986 I met representatives of the First Division Association, the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, the Civil and Public Services Association and the Civil Service Union to discuss a number of questions. The subject of admission charges was raised.

Mr. Banks: I do not suppose that any of those unions were in favour of museum charges. Is the Minister not being disingenuous in saying that this is a matter for the trustees, as the trustees are charging only because of the low level of Government grant to museums? The Minister must have seen the statements issued by the British museum about the inadequacy of its grant, and no doubt charges will soon be introduced there. How can he defend a situation in which the Natural History museum trustees are about to introduce charges, and estimate that that will reduce the number of visitors by 40 per cent.? Where is the social or economic sense in that? Is it not symptomatic of the Government's seedy, street corner shop mentality towards museums and all other matters?

Mr. Luce: The resources that are made available to national museums and galleries have gone up by 13 per cent. in real terms since 1979-80. That is not the issue here. It is a matter of whether the trustees want to seek new ways of raising extra revenue. There are thousands, if not millions, of people around the country who are prepared to go to a variety of museums — not only the out-stations of national museums, but the many independent museums, country houses and subsidised theatres where there are charges. That is the choice of the people, and if it helps to improve facilities, so be it.

Sir David Price: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most important single factor in determining the number of people who visit a local museum is not the level of charges but the perceived relevance of what is on offer at that museum? I wish to extend to my right hon. Friend the Minister and to the hon. Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) an invitation to come to Eastleigh and see the new museum, which is both relevant and popular.

Mr. Luce: I hope that the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) will take up that generous offer, particularly during the general election campaign. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to identify the fact that it is the standards of the museum and what it has to offer people that matter, and that they are prepared to pay if they think that the services that are offered are excellent.

Mr. Freud: Will the Minister confirm that he feels it his duty to preserve the heritage rather than to leave it reliant on tourism or the good sense of trustees?

Mr. Luce: Our heritage is of the greatest importance. In that connection, I was extremely glad that the week before last, through the acceptance in lieu scheme, we acquired a Constable, which is available from this morning at the National gallery and which will be of great benefit to the nation.

Mr. Key: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be quite inappropriate to give too much weight to the opinion of the Civil Service unions about museums? Most museums are independent, people and their families visit independent museums, and the business is flourishing and growing. For example, next month the Wessex horse centre at Teffont is due to open.

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. One has only to travel around the country to see what is happening in the museum world. One new museum is opened every fortnight because of the growing public demand for all types of museum. The evidence of public attendance at museums shows that that demand is being met.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister knows that the charges that are being introduced at the Natural History museum on Wednesday and at three other museums are not, as he has tried to imply, to develop services but to protect basic services for the public. It is because the Government are not providing adequate resources that those trustees are being forced to do that.

Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that the 40 per cent. drop in attendance at the Natural History museum that the trustees anticipate, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred, represents 1 million people next year? That is the scale of the Government's neglect—1 million fewer people will visit the Natural History museum next year.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. There is evidence that, as was the case at the National Maritime museum, there is a drop in attendances for the first few months after the introduction of charges, but that attendances pick up as people get used to the idea of paying. That is the evidence of experience and the hon. Gentleman cannot get away from it. To suggest that we are not increasing resources for museums and galleries is pure nonsense. There has been a real increase of 13 per cent. since 1979-80, and the hon. Gentleman ought to have the grace to accept that fact.

West Midlands

44. **Mr. George** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his estimate of the number of young people attending arts events in the west midlands.

Mr. Luce: Separate records by age distribution are not kept. West Midlands Arts supports four arts centres, which it is estimated that 500,000 young people attended in 1986-87. Many young people attend the Royal Shakespeare theatre, the concerts of the City of Birmingham symphony orchestra, and the many other arts events presented in the west midlands.

Mr. George: I am grateful for that answer. Is the Minister aware of the enormous upsurge of interest among young people in urban areas in the arts and cultural activities? Regrettably, that interest is not being properly harnessed because local authorities do not have statutory responsibilities for the arts, funding has been somewhat curtailed and the Arts Council awards have not met the aspirations of the west midlands region. Can the Minister suggest any inititiatives that he or the Government could take to harness the interests of young people who want far more to do with arts and cultural activities?

Mr. Luce: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is singularly important to encourage young people to attend arts events and the figures that I gave of at least 500,000 attendances during this financial year at the four great arts centres in the west midlands—which are supported by £417,000 of taxpayers' money donated by the West Midlands Regional Arts Association — show what is being done, in addition to our education system, to encourage our young people.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Directorships)

94. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what initiative he is taking to encourage appropriate civil servants to seek unpaid, non-executive directorships of United Kingdom companies.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): The report on the work of the Management and Personnel Office, which was published in January, referred to non-executive directorships as one of a number of ways in which the Government encourage the interchange of staff between the Civil Service and industry and commerce.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome that initiative and development. I know that my right hon. Friend agrees that it is to the benefit of the country as a whole that there should be a greater interchange between civil servants and industrialists and business men, and I recognise the difficulties of secondments being full time. Will my right hon. Friend look carefully at part-time interchanges, not only with more civil servants taking up non-executive directorships, but with more industrialists and business men being appointed to ad hoc advisory bodies dealing with administrative problems of the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend that the more interchange that we can get between the public sector and the private sector, the better it will be. About 40 civil servants have outside, non-paid directorships and they are getting important experience which will be of benefit to the Government. As my hon. Friend knows, there are a number of other schemes. I have improved the targets for the Government and industry secondment scheme, and there is also the straightforward possibility of bringing in outsiders on contract, which can help the Government's service.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I welcome the numbers that the right hon. Gentleman quoted and I hope that they will be increased. Will he acknowledge that business men can learn a great deal, particularly at senior levels in the Civil Service, where they operate in a completely different environment, which is useful to them when they return to their business careers?

Mr. Luce: I agree completely with the hon. Gentleman. It is important that we should continue to encourage business men to come in on secondment. Just under 200 do so at present, and I am trying to encourage more to come in. It is good, not only for them, but for the Civil Service, which benefits from their experience.

Mr. Soames: I welcome the steps that my right hon. Friend has taken, but does he agree that the secondment figures are lamentably low and that an interchange of staff

is immensely to the benefit not only of civil servants but of business men? Will my right hon. Friend and his colleagues exert their political will — that is what is required — to ensure that there is more coming and going between industry and the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: I accept that the number of civil servants with non-executive directorships is very low. It is only a start in the right direction, but I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important to persuade more businesses to take on civil servants so that they can get valuable experience. The Government and I will do whatever we can to encourage that process.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister not worried about the close links between the Civil Service and big business, given the various recent allegations about Ministry of Defence staff becoming involved in work for manufacturers supplying Government contracts? Ought not the Minister to advance with considerable caution, in view of concern about the possibility of corruption?

Mr. Luce: Of course it is important to establish that there is no clash of interests. However, the hon. Gentleman seems to have a hostile attitude towards the private sector. If we as a nation are trying to create more wealth, the more civil servants who have experience of wealth creation, the better it will be for the country.

Recruitment

97. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what representations he has received from Civil Service unions regarding recruitment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: None, sir.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the difficulties facing management—certainly in Leicester—and the Civil and Public Services Association, over the concept of whether overtime should be offered or more casual staff taken on? Does he agree that offering flexible pay nationally is a good concept? If a no-strike clause were brought into the contracts of all new civil servants, would we not have the best Civil Service in the world?

Mr. Luce: I agree that it is important to have a more flexible pay scheme, designed to encourage better recruitment as well as retention of civil servants. The Government are making positive moves in that direction. There is already evidence in certain professions — for example, engineering and science as a whole—that both recruitment and retention are very much better.

Mr. Alton: Does the Minister agree that it would be unnecessary to embark on a major recruitment policy if civil servants were not used for extraneous duties, such as helping to complete tax returns and giving special advice to Ministers?

Mr. Luce: That is a very petty question, and it is not worth answering.

Mr. Key: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is Civil Service policy that, when disabled people are to be recruited, they are automatically interviewed at the point of entry? Will he also confirm that, once a disabled person has been recruited, every attempt is made to ensure that that person is placed in an appropriate job, rather than being given a job that is too demanding and then experiencing the disappointment of being sacked or moved elsewhere?

Mr. Luce: In answer to my hon. Friend's first question, I shall double-check the position.

The Government and the Civil Service employ a 1·4 per cent. quota of disabled people, which is entirely in line with the national position. We are doing our utmost to play our part in that regard.

Mr. Winnick: Should not those employed in the public service be very disturbed lest, if the Government are re-elected—however unlikely that is—civil servants may be unable to take strike action, or may even be forbidden to belong to a trade union, as happened with GCHQ? Bearing in mind what is happening with the teachers, should not the warning issued by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) be heard by those employed in the public service?

Mr. Luce: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. I was interested to note that the Select Committee on Treasury and Civil Service expressed the view last year that the Civil Service provided an impartial service and was loyal to the Government of the day. That view received all-party support.

Mr. Favell: Are the Civil Service unions relaxing their opposition to the relocation of Civil Service jobs in the north, where many well-qualified people are ready, willing and able to do work that could be done far better there than in the south?

Mr. Luce: If both relocation policy and dispersal policy are taken into account — just under 6,000 employees have been dispersed since 1979—a considerable number of people are being relocated on grounds of economy and efficiency.

Dr. McDonald: Will the Minister note and report to his right hon. and hon. Friends the Opposition's alarm at the proposal to cut 433 civil servants in jobcentres who are engaged in helping people to find jobs and also at the proposal to increase the numbers who are employed in the restart scheme, who are concerned merely with discouraging people from claiming benefit, thus reducing the numbers of the unemployed? Will he note this alarm and immediately reverse the policy, because the prime purpose of civil servants in the jobcentres should be to try to enable people to find jobs.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Lady spoilt her case by making quite untrue allegations about the activities of civil servants in discouraging people from claiming benefit. She ought to withdraw her remarks.

As for the size of the Civil Service, the Government have made it quite clear that we shall be entirely flexible, if there is a strong case for improving services. We have done that with Customs and Excise and also with the Inland Revenue, and we have increased the numbers in the Department of Health and Social Security. If there is a case, we consider it carefully.

Mr. Rhodes James: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the reply to my supplementary question on question 40, I beg to give notice that I shall raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. Adley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We all admire the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and the large number of oral questions that he has managed to have placed on the Order Paper——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. It is encouraging that there should be this interest in the arts.

Mr. Adley: My point, Mr. Speaker, is that, by my estimate, 35 of those hon. Members who had oral questions on today's Order Paper were not here, and I am wondering how many of them gave you notice that they would not be here. It costs the public a great deal of money to have questions placed on the Order Paper, and if hon. Members cannot be bothered to turn up public money is wasted.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it helpful?

Mr. Forth: Yes. In the context of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), following a day such as today, will you consider instructing the Table Office that if an hon. Member who is lucky enough to have his question drawn does not turn up to ask his question, it should not accept another question from him?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the House as a whole would welcome that suggestion. There may be very good reasons why an hon. Member cannot be present. However, the tabling of questions is undoubtedly costly, and hon. Members who have questions on the Order Paper, particularly if they are high on the Order Paper and likely to be reached, should be present. If they cannot be present, it would be of great convenience to let the Chair know so that their names are not called.

Mr. Heffer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Should the House not remember what the late Sir Gerald Nabarro once said—that hon. Members should not put down a question unless they know the answer?

Mr. Speaker: I am lost for words.

Orders of the Day

Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

3.33 pm

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is not always that a Minister has the fairly pleasant experience of asking the House to give a Second Reading to a Bill that will probably command support in all parts of the Chamber. I very much hope that this may be such a Bill. We are also very lucky to have the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) leading for the Opposition, because he knows a great deal about the law in this sector. I wish him well in dealing with his speech with his remaining good eye. Gardening is a very dangerous pursuit indeed.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: On the gardening point?

Mr. Thurnham: Yes. It is a question of support from the House. Perhaps the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) feels that there would be even greater support if the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 1) Bill could be incorporated in the Government's Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. Patten: I shall come in a moment to the difficult issue of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 1) Bill. I have serious things to say to my hon. Friend about it.

The Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill is a very important and far-reaching measure that is designed to help a large group of people, some, though by no means all—I stress that point—of whom have suffered real housing problems in recent years. Just as there are good and bad tenants, so there are good and bad landlords. The Bill is aimed at the latter.

The Bill has the peculiar name of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill. Hon. Members may wonder what happened to the Landlord and Tenant (No. 1) Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) introduced his Bill under the ten-minute rule and chose our title, causing us considerable inconvenience and massive public expenditure on the junking and reprinting of perfectly adequate Bills which we were about to put before the House. That does not mean that we are not, in a broad-minded way, prepared to consider the proposals in the Landlord and Tenant (No. 1) Bill. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will seek to explain today exactly why we should follow the course proposed his Bill.

This Bill is about 500,000 households, a high proportion of them in London and the south-east. It is about households in privately owned flats. Many live in so-called mansion blocks—sometimes that is a good term, and sometimes a bad term for the state in which people live. The Bill applies also to the large number of purpose-built blocks of flats erected between the wars and in the last 20 years, and to converted houses. About two thirds of these households are long leaseholders and the remaining third are Rent Act tenants.

This is not the first time since 1979 that this Government have legislated to increase protection for residents in private flats. Our Housing Act 1980 included some useful new rights for tenants of flats paying variable service charges. However, evidence soon began to emerge of more deep-seated problems which needed to be tackled. The complaints will be familiar to hon. Members from constituency correspondence, particularly in London, and other areas, including south coast towns.

Some tenants suffer from excessive service charges and others from indifference or neglect by the landlord and his or her agents, from defective leases which make it impossible to get things done, from difficulties in contacting the landlord and from problems over greatly increased insurance and so on.

As a result of pressure we decided in 1984 to establish a committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Edward Nugee QC, to collect evidence of the problems and to make recommendations about how to deal with them. The Bill is based almost entirely on that committee's recommendations, although in some important respects we have decided to go a little further than the committee suggested.

I should like to make two general points about the Bill before describing its contents briefly in the normal way. First, I see the Bill as a consumer protection measure. It gives an important range of new rights to a group of hard-pressed consumers who need help to deal with a particular set of problems. I stress that the Bill is even-handed. It is not in any sense an anti-landlord Bill. There is nothing in the Bill which the good and responsible landlord should fear. We want more good and responsible landlords, with the involvement of building societies, pension funds and others. The Bill is aimed at bad, irresponsible and neglectful landlords—no one else. We wish to protect the long leaseholders and the Rent Act tenants of those landlords.

Secondly, the Bill is further evidence of the Government's balanced approach to housing problems. The Bill shows again that where there are genuine difficulties or serious abuses we are ready to act to counter them. We believe that the provision of housing should be primarily a matter for the independent sector, but of course we are prepared to regulate the independent sector to give people statutory rights, where that is necessary.

I turn briefly to the Bill's content and show how that will be done.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): At the beginning of his speech the Minister pointed out that the Bill had the full support of Members on both sides of the House. Does he not agree that the type of abuses with which he rightly intends to deal, and about which we have been pressing for action for some time, illustrates the need to ensure that other tenants, not necessarily covered by the Bill, continue to have the protection given to them by the Rent Act 1977? The Minister has suggested that such protection may disappear, in the unlikely event of this Government being returned. Does he not agree that that would present to so many people the tremendous dangers that he has been speaking about?

Mr. Patten: I am extremely glad that the Opposition are so interested in this important issue that as many as four Labour Members have turned up for the debate.

Mr. Winnick: Answer the point.

Mr. Patten: I am about to do so.

Ministers have said time and time again, and I repeat it now, that we have no intention of upsetting the security of tenure of those who are presently living in secure accommodation in Britain. If I have said that once since I have held my present position, I must have said it a dozen times. Unfortunately, there are those who are too deaf to hear and those who seek by smear to alarm unnecessarily private sector tenants. We are used to such tactics——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham) *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I will not give way. It was a grevious mistake to give way once. I am trying, in my normal subfusc way, to get the Bill, which I believe has all-party agreement, through as quickly as possible this afternoon. Perhaps we could save the general roustabout tactics of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and his hon. Friends for other occasions.

Part I of the Bill gives tenants a right of first refusal where the landlord wishes to dispose of his interest in a block of flats. That is certainly not a new thought. The British Property Federation has already issued guidance to its Members suggesting that, when they wish to dispose of a block of flats, they should, where possible, give the residents the opportunity to bid for it when it goes on the market. I applaud the federation for its characteristically constructive approach to this matter.

The Nugee report suggested a procedure based on offer and counter offers that would give the tenants first refusal at a price to be negotiated between the parties within a set timetable. If the landlord fails to go through the procedure and sells to someone else, the tenants may buy back the property at the same price and on the same terms.

Part II enables any tenants of flats, whether long leaseholders or rack-renting tenants, to apply to the court for the appointment of a manager to assume responsibility for the management of the premises containing the flats where the landlord has failed to discharge his obligations under the terms of the lease. This gives residents a practical remedy in blocks that have been neglected and where the landlord, as sometimes is the case, has refused to put matters right.

Part III enables the majority—I stress majority—of leaseholders of flats in a block, let wholly or mainly on long leases, to apply to the court for an order to acquire compulsorily the landlord's interests where the landlord has failed to discharge his obligations and the appointment of a manager would not be an adequate remedy of last resort in cases where the landlord has behaved exceptionally badly. Alas, that is sometimes the case.

Part IV enables a court to vary the terms of a long lease of a flat in certain circumstances. It provides that, if a long lease fails to make satisfactory provision for the management of the flats, any party to the lease may apply to the court to vary it. This is an extremely important part of the Bill because it enables the landlord and the majority of long leaseholders of flats to apply to the court for an order to vary all the leases in the block where some changes affecting the entire block are desirable but where a minority of the leaseholders withhold their consent.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene to ask a specific question. He has referred twice to a "majority of leaseholders". Does that mean the numerical majority or the majority when it comes to the aggregation of the rateable value of the properties? In London especially many properties are let on long lease or sold on long lease interests with high rateable values, with a few on low rateable values. What is my hon. Friend's definition of "majority"?

Mr. Patten: It is the definition that is set out in the Bill, which my hon. Friend will have read carefully. He has raised an issue that we shall have to consider extremely closely in Committee.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): My hon. Friend speaks repeatedly of blocks of flats, and it would seem from clause 3 that the only exclusion, apart from service occupancies, for example, is a tenant of more than 50 per cent. of the total number of flats in the building. If a house has been converted into two flats only, is the right exercisable because each tenant will not be a tenant of more than 50 per cent. of the building?

Mr. Patten: Such tenants may well be exempt in any event. I was careful in my introductory remarks to say that I was not referring only to mansion flats. I said—I quote from the introduction of my speech—

"the Bill applies also to the large number of purpose-built blocks of flats erected between the wars . . . and to converted houses".

We may have to return to the issue in some detail in Committee, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising it now.

Part IV enables a court to vary the terms of a long lease of a flat in certain circumstances. It provides that, where a long lease fails to make satisfactory provision for the proper management of the flats, any party to the lease may apply to the court to vary it. This part of the Bill enables the landlord and a majority of long leaseholders of flats to apply to the court for an order to vary all the leases in the block—this relates to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi)—where some change affecting the block as a whole is desirable but where a minority withholds its consent. These provisions will help to overcome the common problem of defective leases, and it will enable landlords and residents to make changes to their leases which are desirable but not essential, such as setting up a sinking fund, which many would think to be an excellent idea, as a hedge against expenditure on major matters such as roofs, lifts, the refurbishment of common parts, damp coursing and drain repairs which are necessary in mansion blocks of flats.

Part V deals directly with the management of blocks of flats. There are those who criticise management companies that act on behalf of ground landlords, which have been the cause of problems in the past, as well as ground landlords. Clause 39 strengthens the provisions in section 18 to 30 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 relating to flats and extends them to other residential dwellings. Clause 40 gives a recognised residents' association the right to be consulted about the appointment of managing agents. This provision is not the result of a recommendation in the Nugee report, but we thought it important to include it. In many mansion blocks of flats, groups of tenants have banded together in a tenants' association. If there is to be a change of managing agents, it would seem reasonable that they should be consulted.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My hon. Friend will know that I served as a member of the Nugee committee. There was considerable evidence suggesting that many residents would feel more confident if they had some reasonable and balanced say on the appointment of managing agents. I say to my hon. Friend on behalf of my constituents that many thousands of people throughout the country, but especially in London, would much appreciate the extension of the Nugee committee's recommendations to include this part of the Bill.

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said, with characteristic generosity, as someone who gave such distinguished service to the Nugee committee.

Clause 41 extends the permissible objects of registered housing associations to the management of blocks of flats.

I need not detain the House long on parts VI and VII. Part VI extends a residential tenant's right to information about his or her landlord's name and address. It provides that the landlord's written demand for rent or service must contain an address in England or Wales at which notices may be served on him or her by the tenant. This is a problem, not just in London, but in the coalfield communities and the north-west. Part VI also inserts new provisions into section 3 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, which make the former landlord—I stress the word "former"—liable for any breaches of obligations under the tenancies until such time as he or the new landlord notifies the tenant of the new landlord's name and address. In other words, there is no way in which a former landlord could or should slip out of the contractural obligations to which he or she is already party simply by failing to notify the tenants of a new landlord's name and address to whom he or she has sold the interest in the block of flats.

Part VII deals with miscellaneous points.

There are other matters that we have not yet been able to include within the Bill. The Nugee committee made a number of important recommendations about insurance and the treatment of service charges which are not yet, alas, covered in the Bill simply because there was not time. However, we propose to bring forward amendments during the Bill's passage through the House which will be drafted purely in the interests of tenants along the lines suggested by the Nugee committee.

The Nugee committee also recommended the appointment of housing assessors in the county court to provide residents with a much speedier means of obtaining legal redress. I know that that has upset many tenants in mansion flats—and I use that phrase generically to cover all such people affected by the Bill. That is an issue which needs to be considered in the context of the future of the civil justice system as a whole. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the Lord Chancellor's civil justice review committee looked at that question and proposed "housing action", something along the lines of the small claims procedure which, if adopted—perhaps it will be—should go a long way to meeting the Nugee committee's recommendations about redress being sought much more easily by those who need it.

I must not conclude without paying tribute to the members of the Nugee committee and to its distinguished chairman for the effort that they put into collecting evidence and analysing the problems and for the extremely balanced way in which the committee formulated its proposals to reflect the considerable range of interests involved.

If the House will allow me, I should mention the prominent part played by a number of hon. Members in bringing the problems in this area to the attention of the House. I have already had the opportunity of thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), who was a member of the Nugee committee. I certainly could not forget, and generations of Ministers responsible for housing could not forget, the efforts made in the interest of mansion block tenants by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). He has introduced more private Members' Bills than many of us could lay claim to over the years, and has done such a lot in the interests of his constituents, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), who was a distinguished Minister responsible for housing and has shown great interest in this matter and has focused public attention on the issues dealt with in the Bill.

Hon. Gentlemen's pressures led us to set up the Nugee committee in the first place. The committee reported, and we accepted its report on 8 April 1986. Less than a year later we are bringing forward a Bill to put its recommendations into effect. This is a token of our determination to help mansion block tenants with their problems. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that no one heard that comment. The word "bloody" would not be recorded by *Hansard* in any event.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I congratulate the Minister on introducing the Bill. However, it is a little late in the Session. It might suffer an instant decline if there is an early general election.

Mr. Patten: Such is the all-party support that I know that the Bill will receive and such will be the excellence of the scrutiny that it will receive in Committee, I am sure that it will pass rapidly through to law in the interests of tenants. I am certain that no hon. Member, now or later, would want to vote against the Bill. However, I suppose that within the alliance there may well be internal tensions about which we are not yet privy which may lead alliance Members to vote against each other in the way we have seen from time to time. Alas and alack, the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) has made one of his valedictory appearances in the House. However, no SDP Member has been able to attend this afternoon. I dare say that were there to be a vote we would find alliance Members voting with the official Opposition, as they normally do. Dear oh dear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am afraid that I have allowed the hon. Member for Isle of Wight to introduce an unnecessarily political element into the debate. I must return to my normal, calm, consensual approach to matters and begin my peroration.

The present Government have done much more to promote housing rights than any other in post-war years. I want to itemise what we have done. We have given public sector tenants a whole range of rights. We have given them the right to security of tenure which they did not have before 1980, the right to buy their own homes, the right to get repairs done, and the right to be consulted about matters affecting their tenancies; and today sees the Second Reading of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill which will significantly strengthen the rights of private

[Mr. Patten]

leaseholders living in blocks of flats. A common thread that runs through the Government's housing policy is the objective of giving people more choice in the types of housing available to them and more influence over the way in which their housing is managed in the public sector or, as we are considering today, in the private sector.

The Bill provides a framework for the orderly management of flats in private ownership. All residents, whether they are long leaseholders or renting tenants, have a right to expect that their homes will be properly managed. I believe that our proposals will provide for that and will bring the general level of management of flats much closer to the standards already achieved by the many good landlords and managing agents in this country. I commend the Bill to the House.

3.57 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The Opposition welcome the Bill because it carries with it much that we have campaigned for and much that is Labour party policy, although I do not for one moment detract from the campaigning that has been carried out on both sides of the House. It was particularly significant that one of the first defeats of the Conservative Government in 1980 during the passage of the Housing Act 1980 was engineered by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and supported by the Opposition. Indeed, he would not have achieved that defeat without our assistance.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): As the hon. Gentleman put that on the record, I must state that I was a Minister in 1980. I actually did what he said in 1971.

Mr. Fraser: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon for not attributing his rebellion to the right period.

The Bill represents a great deal of what is Labour party policy, although I do not dissociate myself from criticisms made about the present law which have been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House. If we have a criticism of the Bill—it is a constructive criticism—it is that it ought to go further along the road of leasehold enfranchisement.

I also welcome and endorse the Minister's remarks about the work and inventiveness of the Nugee committee which laid the foundations of the Bill. The committeee was bold, forthright and imaginative within its terms of reference. It did what many committees ought to do; it pushed its terms of reference to the limit, and I congratulate it on that. There were Labour nominees on the committee, including Mr. John Mills, as well as Conservative nominees, and it deserves rounded congratulations. The committee consulted properly and caught the mood of tenants in the way in which it set about the questionaires and the need to correct the gross abuses indulged in by some unscrupulous landlords and other abuses just as injurious to tenants resulting from plain incompetence and neglect by landlords with no ability to manage property.

The Nugee committee was also right to address itself to the defective constitution on which the relationship between landlord and tenant in a lease was often based. It is recognised that the contractual bundle of rights and obligations which constitute a lease have often turned out to be defective not because they were badly drafted but sometimes due to the passage of time and sometimes because landlords, who have essentially dictated the terms of leases, have tended to draft them in such a way as to foist the maximum obligations on the tenant while accepting the minimum for themselves. For instance, it is by no means uncommon for a long lease to give the landlord no obligation to repair, although there is an obligation on the tenant to contribute to service charges, and it is commonplace for the landlord to have no obligation to repair unless a service charge is paid in advance. Many leases are also regarded by building societies as defective because the arrangements for insurance are inadequate, often not covering full replacement or the full range of risks. Policies may not be index linked and some leases do not oblige the landlord to produce the policy or to note the interest of the tenant on it.

In other cases, leases have become defective due to the collapse of management companies. In a recent case 20 or 30 tenants were deeply concerned because when the lease was originally established the landlord had taken no responsibility for management or repairs but had set up a management company responsible for services, insurance and repairs. That is common practice, but in that case the management company was struck off and ceased to exist as a result of incompetence on the part of the managers, with the result that no one is responsible for repairs or insurance, everything rests on the good will of the tenants and most of the leases are unsaleable.

It is good practice among landlords to form management companies and to vest them entirely in the tenants so that there is a coincidence of interests, partly to give tenants greater rights and partly to relieve landlords of responsibilities. A reasonable charge should be made for management, but there should be no profit in it. In some cases the landlords have run the managing company but then lost interest and the company has collapsed, to the consternation of the tenants whose interests often became unsaleable. I hope that the Bill will follow best practice so that wherever, possible management is in the hands of the tenants.

Following years of pressure and campaigning, the Bill is an essential addition to the law of landlord and tenant and redresses the imbalance which so often exists between the parties to a lease. I hope that the Minister will not blush or regard it as an attack when I say that it is a fine Bill and a remarkable conversion, giving private tenants the option to buy their blocks irrespective of the length of their leases. Clause 4 of the Bill is very much like clause four of the Labour party constitution in that it advocates the social ownership of property in the hands of the tenants. We are glad that the Government have come round to endorsing that aspect of our constitution. It has always been Labour party policy and it sits well beside our proposal to give private tenants the right to buy which has so far been denied to them. In the meantime, the Bill at least gives them the collective right to buy.

Mr. Wheeler: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have long been involved in this subject. The Nugee committee explored very carefully the concept of the right to buy, but there is a difficulty. Every private sector resident has the right to buy in that he is free to seek to negotiate with the owner of the property and to discover whether the owner is prepared to sell. One or two constituents have written

to me saying that they would like to buy, but when I ask whether they have approached the landlord, the answer usually is no. In cases in which the landlord is willing to sell, the landlord has been willing to allow time for residents to put forward a purchase package. This is the dilemma. If there were real evidence of a case to extend the law, I would agree with it, but has the hon. Gentleman found such a case? The Nugee committee did not seem to have found one, and I have not found one either.

Mr. Fraser: I think that it is a matter of judgment. The right to buy has been invested in local authority tenants. That is no longer a matter of serious dispute except in areas where there is an acute shortage of housing for rent, which is a special problem in areas such as London and particularly in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The right was recognised in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, which was described as "Rachmanism in reverse" by the now Lord Boyd-Carpenter, and is no longer in dispute at all, but I think that social progress has advanced sufficiently for both the collective and the individual right to buy to be extended to private tenants. No doubt that matter can be explored further in Committee. I was certainly not criticising the Government. Indeed, I was congratulating them.

Sir Hugh Rossi: During the passage of the 1967 legislation, I succeeded in Committee in removing the rateable value limits, but the Labour Government reinstated them on Report after representations from the universities and others. Despite many requests from the Conservative Opposition for flats to be included, the Labour Government resisted that proposal. Are we to understand that there has been a complete change in Labour party thinking and that the Labour party now advocates the removal of all rateable value limits and the extension of leasehold enfranchisement to all flats?

Mr. Fraser: I shall not give an unconditional answer to the hon. Gentleman's question about rateable value limits, but personally I see no logical case for them. As for the enfranchisement of leasehold interests, this has long been Labour party policy and I shall deal with it in more detail later in my speech.

The Bill is also remarkable as a denial of the supremacy of private landlordism which in other areas seems central to Conservative party policy. We believe that the management of rented premises is best carried out by responsible and accountable landlords, preferably the tenants themselves. We have supported the assured tenancy scheme because the landlords involved are responsible and are approved by Parliament. Incidentally, I saw the Minister on television recently—it is a great pity to have one's Sunday disturbed by seeing one's opponent on television—seeking to suggest that assured tenancies were somehow a substitute for the loss of hundreds of thousands of rented homes. Despite the fact that Members on both sides of the House have endorsed that development, it should be put on record that, during the past six years, it has provided only about two homes per week to rent. It is irrelevant to the central problem of providing homes to rent for those on low incomes.

This Bill is a denial of the supremacy of private landlordism. It is remarkable in that it gives the private right of compulsory purchase where landlords are dishonest and unscrupulous, or plain inadequate.

In part I no distinction is drawn between the option to be exercised by tenants, irrespective of whether they are long leaseholders or short leaseholders. The right of compulsory acquisition is invested only in the long leaseholder, rather than in leaseholders of all descriptions. However, it might be worth while to consider extending the right of compulsory acquisition across the board. Nevertheless, if it is restricted only to long leaseholders, it is still a remarkable conversion. It is worth having analogous developments in other areas of land law, including for business, as well as residential tenants. Those rights should exist in industry also.

The Minister has set out the details of the Bill and the way in which it matches the Nugee report. I do not intend to deal with the Bill in detail at any great length because we shall have the chance to do that in Committee. I have only a couple of observations. The provisions of part III should be available to all tenants. Part IV, dealing with the modification of covenants, is extremely important. Covenants are sometimes defective, but sometimes they have simply been overtaken by progress. The definition of a defective covenant should extend to leases under which there is insufficient provision for the improvement of the property, as well as for its management and repair. I shall give an example from a mansion block in my constituency which has a problem with its central heating system. One can repair a central heating system for as long as one likes, and manage it as well as one likes, but this system is plainly defective, out of date, and in need of modernisation. I have tried to get the landlord to agree to what the tenants want and to modernise and improve the heating system.

Therefore, the definition of that which is defective in the lease, in the light of progress and of developments, should include improvements as well, although there must be provisions to protect those tenants who cannot afford expensive improvements. However, double glazing, which cuts heating costs, and the provision of door entry systems are improvements and not repairs. The same is true of the modernisation of a heating system or the insulation of a roof. Many such measures should be available to landlords and tenants collectively. I hope that we shall consider that part of the Bill constructively to see whether it can be extended to sinking funds and improvements.

This is an important and welcome Bill, but if it is passed in the form in which it appears today it will be deficient. I say that in a constructive rather than a highly critical sense. A deficiency will remain in the inevitable disparity between landlord and tenant. In some circumstances, that relationship will be open to abuse. I do not castigate every landlord, but, in my experience, the balance is tipped almost unconsciously in favour of the landlord on almost every occasion, despite the fact that the landlord may be large, reputable or charitable. I define a charitable landlord as one whose constitution is accepted by the Charity Commissioners, and not one who is charitable in the humane sense. I believe that the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) knows of some charitable landlords, but such landlords are sometimes among the hardest. They develop the longest schedules of dilapidations and create the largest surveyors' costs when drawing up the schedules. One has only to consider hospital foundations, Dulwich college or the Church Commissioners. Being a charitable landlord does not mean that one is the most benign landlord on earth.

We need further to redress the imbalance between landlord and tenant. The disparity of power applies to

[Mr. Fraser]

residential and commercial properties alike. It is about time that we put an end to the monstrous doctrine of privity of contract on leases, and to what is called the liability of the original lessee. That militates against the interests of the commercial and business tenant because somebody who signs a lease may be liable upon the terms of that lease for the rest of his life. Twenty or 30 years may go by and a perfectly innocent residential or business tenant who has no control and could never have any control over subsequent events under the lease may find himself liable for non-payment of rent or for the dilapidations.

Mr. John Patten: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Law Commission is currently considering that issue? We must wait and see what the commission proposes on privity in relation to private and residential lettings.

Mr. Fraser: Yes, I was aware of that. I often pressed the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), to refer that matter to the Law Commission because I was so incensed about it.

Another example is the way in which the covenants can be balanced between the two parties. In a consumer contract, it is unthinkable that one may hire a car under a contract containing a provision that the hirer of the car will put and keep it in good repair, and that if one then hires a car with a defective engine the person hiring out the car expects one to replace the engine after having hired the car for a few days. However, in a landlord and tenant transaction, such a contract is perfectly thinkable. There have been cases in which a landlord has put into leases an obligation to put and keep in repair. However, the cladding may fall off the building or the heating system may be full of asbestos. Despite the fact that the landlord has developed the building, he puts on the tenant the obligation for putting right his own faults. That cannot be right.

I turn to a matter with which the Bill should certainly deal—the right of the long leaseholder to extend the lease of his flat. In the residential sector, the inability to extend one's lease will remain the outstanding opportunity for abuse of power by unscrupulous landlords. That opportunity for abuse will grow as the totality of leases gets shorter. As with every other unfair practice, it is no answer to say that the parties are free to reach a bargain between themselves. It is no answer to say, as did the hon. Member for Westminster, North, that they are free to negotiate. That is an illusory freedom. Equality of bargaining power does not exist. The Bill should recognise the inequality of power between landlord and tenant in this area, as it does in the areas of management and repair.

Therefore, the traditional party of the tenant, the Labour party, appeals to the traditional party of the landlord, the Conservative party, to modify the Bill and to tip the balance in favour of the enfranchisement of leasehold flats. The Government will say that that is not part of the Nugee report or recommendations. However, the committee could not recommend that because that was not within its terms of reference. Nevertheless, the opportunity to remedy the imbalance must be seized.

My hon. Friends and I believe that the rights conferred by the Labour Government in 1967 on long leaseholders of residential houses should, 20 years later, be conferred on the tenants of flats. That is Labour party policy. My hon. Friends and I believe that this legislative opportunity should be used to carry that policy into law.

In our policy statement "Homes for the Future" we stated that tenants should have, first, the right to hire and fire managing agents. The Bill goes some way to meeting that, but it could go further. Secondly, we stated that there should be maximum limits for management fees. The Bill may bring that about. We stated, thirdly, that tenants should have the right to see the freeholder's accounts and to have them audited by an auditor of the tenants' choice. That is still the right way to go about it. The auditor should not be the servant of either the landlord or the tenant; he should be independent. I see no reason why he should not be appointed by the tenants, just as shareholders appoint an auditor for their company.

Fourthly, we have said that tenants should have the right to correct defective convenants—for example, for repairs and insurance—and the Bill will do that. Fifthly, we have said that tenants should have the right collectively to buy the freehold and sixthly, the right to extend the lease in the same way as for leasehold houses.

My colleagues and I have taken every legislative opportunity to put that policy into law. Indeed, I have forgotten how many Bills I have presented. We have taken every opportunity to present private legislation and to amend Government legislation. Now we have the ideal opportunity to give long leasehold tenants of residential flats the right to extend their leases. We could provide the right collectively to enfranchise leaseholders whether or not the enfranchisement is triggered by the malpractice or incompetence of landlords.

Apart from the principle and the analogy with the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, there are other powerful reasons for allowing the extension of leases. First, when a lease has fewer than 50 years to run, the property becomes less mortgageable, so less saleable, unless the lessee takes a disproportionate drop in the price of the leasehold. Since the lessee will almost invariably want to buy another property, it is not fair to ask him to accept a reduced price. Secondly, a short lease puts the landlord in a unique position to extract an extortionate payment from the tenant. I shall not go through the long list of examples just from my constituency, but the conduct of some landlords has been unforgivable. Often when on an independent valuation the cost of extending the lease should be about £2,000, a premium of two or three times that sum is demanded. That is unforgivable and acts against both the public and the private interest.

Thirdly, a tenant's inability to extend the lease means that there is a disincentive to modernise. A failure to invest sufficiently in housing, whether public or private investment, is one of the greatest failures of present housing policy. Fourthly, the presence of the fag end of leases led to horrendous conditions in Brixton, north Kensington and many other parts of London and our big cities. We cannot afford to take the risk again, because the fag end of leases of flats will lead to the same squalid conditions that appeared in the inner cities 20 or 30 years ago.

We welcome the Bill, but we repeat that the reform of the law of landlord and tenant must go further. The Bill should not merely modify and check abuse and create rights which are triggered by abuse but should create new rights, such as the right collectively to buy the freehold whatever the circumstances and the right of an individual

tenant to extend a lease by 50 years in exactly the same way as a tenant of a leasehold house can. The Bill should provide for the emancipation and enfranchisement of leaseholders in principle as well as in the circumstances outlined by the Nugee committee.

This is a valuable Bill and if the Government accept the Opposition's amendments, it will become invaluable.

4.23 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Over the years the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) has certainly proved to be one of the most knowledgeable Labour Members on housing matters. Occasionally we wonder why he is not shadow Secretary of State for the Environment because his knowledge is so deep and detailed. On more than one occasion, I have crossed swords with him on matters of principle, but today there is not much between us, except perhaps on one issue.

The hon. Gentleman was correct to point out that until this Bill there were a variety of problems to do with service charges, which have been causing increasing difficulties. He then charmingly chided the Government side for appearing to be converted to Labour's clause four. He overlooks the fact that the right of tenants to purchase their block applies only if the landlord wishes to dispose of it. That is the difference between us. There is no conversion to clause 4.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has temporarily left the Chamber but I trust that, perhaps after Second Reading, he may give us a dissertation. He said that we were late on the scene and that everything in relation to tenants' service charges had come from the Labour Government. Perhaps I could remind the House that the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson), who, alas, is being pushed out by Mr. Livingstone, when he was Minister said:

"I shall not go into case histories, as we accept that the case put to us is sufficient material for us to digest in one debating session. I say that to illustrate that I should like to look into the potential for public accountability, to the tenants and maybe to the community at large, via the courts or by some other procedure for the running of the financial and other aspects of management of such properties.

I could go on to other headings with which I am concerned, but I underline that the kind of headings that I have indicated already would rank high in the review that I should wish to achieve with a view to future legislative and policy action."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 11 June 1974; c. 384-85.]

Five years later when the Labour Government ceased to exist nothing had emerged. I gave the right hon. Gentleman notice that I would refer to him. I am not doing so in any unpleasant way and I am sure that he meant what he said. However, the collective leadership of the Labour party ranked the problems and issues of private tenants at the bottom of the list and they did nothing. The hon. Member for Norwood referred to our belated conversion, but the rights to vet managing agents and to an independent audit of accounts were suggested years ago by the Conservative party. Nothing was done by the Labour Government. The facts prove it: they had five years to do something, but they did nothing. On that one issue the hon. Gentleman has exposed clearly that, now that Labour thinks there is electoral popularity for this measure, it will come round to the view expressed by Conservative Members for many years.

Mr. Hoddle: Perhaps my hon. Friend's characteristic modesty will prevent him from saying that as a distinguished Minister in the Department of the Environment he introduced, in the Housing Bill 1980, on the Committee of which I was pleased to serve, protection to public sector tenants through the tenants' charter. Does he agree that he gave public sector tenants the same rights as tenants in the private sector, as my hon. Friend the Minister has just said? That is further confirmation that the Conservative party looks after the rights of both public and private sector tenants.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Perhaps I should drop my mask of modesty and agree with my hon. Friend. The facts speak for themselves and no amount of long speeches from Labour Members or tendentious literature from the Labour party will do any more than show their facade. The facts show what Conservative Members have been pressing for and have been doing.

Mr. Raymond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: There will be plenty of time for the hon. Gentleman to make one of his notoriously long speeches, so I shall listen to it with great interest and I promise that I shall not interrupt him. I would not dare. I only wish that he would return to his previous incarnation running the Shelter Housing Advisory Committee where he did a first-class job. In those days, his speeches were not so long and they may have been wittier. We enjoyed them and our meetings with the hon. Gentleman when he wore that hat. After the general election I hope that he will wish to resume that task, which he did so well.

I welcome the Bill. If one issue has predominated in my work in the House, it has been the rights of private tenants. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, it was possible to extend some of that work to the rights of public tenants, many of whom were treated as serfs. As he said, for too many years now, private tenants have suffered from bad treatment by a minority of bad landlords and equally bad managing agents. I shall refer to a couple of letters about recent events that I think will considerably disturb the House, particularly as one is from a firm of solicitors. One would not normally expect nonsense to be written by them.

The first time that I attacked my Government was in 1971, as the hon. Member for Norwood said. I battled for a right to challenge service charge accounts, a right which, until then, had been non-existent. I had to fight my right hon. Friends. The then Minister was my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) and the junior Minister was my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre). I beat them on the first vote. I was inexperienced then and did not know what would follow. The Whips became busy, and I lost the second vote, so my clause was not added to the Bill. However, my noble Friends in another place looked at the matter and were kind enough to make the first improvements.

The next occasion on which there was the possibility of legislation was in 1974. The Housing Act 1974 was introduced in that short Parliament and much progress was made. I was able to persuade some Opposition Members to join me. They were the more intelligent ones, who are now no longer in the parliamentary Labour party. Mr. George Cunningham and Mr. Bruce Douglas-Mann both gave me support, but it was not sufficient to override what the Minister was able to do, and the Minister won

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

most Divisions by a majority of one. Then came 1980, when I had the privilege of being a departmental Minister. I could actually argue with officials from a position of some power. I could say to them that I was not interested in the difficulties that they told me about; all I wanted to know was how something could be done. As first-class civil servants, they found a way of doing it. A Back Bencher putting that point would find the argument against him to be overwhelming. He would not be in a position to say what I was able to say. Still not enough was done and loopholes have been emerging all the time.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the 1985 Act made more progress. In particular, it did something important for public sector tenants. It gave them the right to ask for some co-operative management of their blocks of flats. Some blocks of flats, especially in London, could be better managed by tenants than by local authorities, because tenants live in them and they know what they want. I hope to be able to encourage tenants in some of the blocks in my constituency to ask Camden council to permit them to manage their own blocks. I shall be fascinated to hear the response—if I get it. Camden council staff are refusing to answer letters from councillors or Members of Parliament. That is the most disgraceful thing that I have known. I hope that Camden council will not pay the staff who are indulging in such anti-democratic activities.

Mr. John Patten: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Committee, when the Housing and Planning Act 1986 was being considered, the hon. Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) strongly supported the right of tenants to apply to their local councils, such as Camden council, for the opportunity to manage their own blocks of flats? Does my hon. Friend suggest that, locally, Camden is not following Labour party national policy?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I would not wish to upset the hon. Member for Norwood by trying to associate him with some of the people who lead Camden council. He is far too respectable to mix in their company. For example, he would not have issued an invitation to Sinn Fein to address the council. I have a feeling that official Labour party policy will be ignored on that issue.

We have now passed what I call the era of old-fashioned, evil landlords—the Sterns, the Bergers and the old Freshwater group—and some shady and less professional agents. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment set up a committee, under my distinguished constituent, Mr. Edward Nugee, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) also served. The committee inquired into the whole aspect of the management of privately owned flats, and blocks of flats in particular. The committee did a superb job. It brooded, it worked hard, and quickly came up with a variety of suggestions and many major proposals, which, as my hon. Friend has said, the Government have translated into the Bill.

The Government must have caused the parliamentary draftsmen to work fast and hard. They are the stumbling block. The business managers on either side of the House do not decide what Bills come to the House; the parliamentary draftsmen do. That is a sobering thought. The best laid schemes on both sides of the House can be frustrated by a lack of sufficient parliamentary draftsmen. I thank Mr. Nugee and the Government for working so hard and fast.

The major proposal relates to the right of refusal that may be exercised when a landlord decides to sell a block. Until now, it has been a difficult issue. I had a major case in my constituency. The Church Commissioners tried to sell a substantial block of property without even offering it to its tenants. The commissioners were about to conclude a deal with a company resident in the Channel Islands when news came to me. I created a certain amount of fuss, the Church Commissioners listened and it gave the tenants three months in which to raise the money and match the price. I am delighted to say that the tenants were able to do that. That was a matter of influencing—there was no right at all. I am glad that the Bill proposes that right.

I am also glad that tenants will now have a right to ask the court to appoint a manager when an owner fails to carry out his obligations. I first tried to obtain that right in 1974, and the then Government said, "It is not necessary. It cannot be done. We do not want it." They made sure that it was voted down. I am glad to note that it is now possible to appoint a manager.

I am also pleased that there now exists the right to acquire the freehold when a block is already owned by leaseholders and when a landlord has failed to perform his residual duties. I heard of a case in my constituency in which a block was falling into disrepair because the landlord would not do the minor repairs that were still his responsibility, even though he had no financial interest because he had sold off 99-year leases and there was no review of the ground rents. I am glad that it is now possible, with the court's approval, to acquire such blocks.

I am also pleased that there should be a right of consultation in the appointment of managing agents. There are still some unscrupulous managing agents. There were some bad ones and, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, there were some incompetent ones. We need more tightening up of their professionalism. I shall quote from a letter from one of my constituents who lives in a block called Eton place. I stress that the freeholders are not Eton college; it just happens that in that part of the world lots of places begin with an E. I hope that those hon. Members who considered the Housing Act 1974 will not object to my dotting names about, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)—then representing Manchester, Ardwick—did in those days. He and I scattered the pages of *Hansard* with the names of blocks of flats in our constituencies. I shall not scatter more than a couple of names on this occasion. The letter from my constituent states:

"I am appalled by the state of the book-keeping which provides the information whereby lessees' service charges are levied, and the obstacles placed in my way both by the company and by the auditors, when I seek to exercise my rights to examine these accounts. The account should consist of:

(a) Items charged to lessees in the previous year and paid for by the company in the year under review. Invoices should be filed in order of payment and identified as 'brought forward'.

(b) Items charged and paid for in year under review, analysed according to the class of expenditure so as to agree with the classes shown in the audited accounts.

(c) Items charged in year under review and not yet paid for: copy invoices should appear with the accounts.

(d) The service charge would readily relate to b—a+c.

In our case, information has been withheld, vouchers are in disorder, and entries are unclear and, sometimes, wrongly made. There is no evidence that the auditor has sought to improve the methods whose probity he is there to confirm."

This is an important issue and it is right to put it on record. The managing agent is a firm called Parkgate, which manages several blocks of flats in that locality. It is, apparently, a subsidiary of the owning company. If the auditors have to be wholly unconnected with the owners, the same should apply to the managing agents. I shall return to that issue, but at the moment I want to try to establish a thread.

I welcome something that I asked for more than a decade ago, which is that tenants — I use that word generically in the way that my hon. Friend used the word "blocks" — should be able to take their cases to the county court and should not be required to go to the High Court. That is because it is possible for too many landlords to get cases to the High Court knowing that tenants probably could not afford to take them there. Even if tenants knew that they would win, they could not afford to lay out the money. If the landlord happened to lose, the costs would be added to the service charges. I am delighted that the Bill will outlaw that and says that cases should go to the county court. This will be a real benefit.

I am also delighted that what I call the musical chairs syndrome has come to an end and that where a statutory notice has been served it will not be possible for an owner rapidly to sell to somebody else so that the whole process has to start over and over again. I, and I am sure other hon. Members, have had cases where there has been a change of ownership perhaps four or five times merely to dodge the statutory notice. I have a specific question to put to the Minister and I shall be grateful to hear his answer when he winds up. He has said that notices will be served providing the name and address of the landlord. I welcome that, but I suggest that there is an anomaly. I refer my hon. Friend to schedule 2 on page 56. Paragraph 2(c) talks about consultation and says:

"The notice shall describe the works to be carried out and invite observations on them and on the estimates and shall state the name and the address in the United Kingdom of the person to whom the observations may be sent . . . "

If my hon. Friend looks at clause 43*(b)* on page 42 he will see that it says:

"if that address is not in England and Wales, an address in England and Wales at which notices . . ."

Why can both of those not specifically say England and Wales or the United Kingdom? There is no clear reason why they cannot. I hope that my hon. Friend will not say that the reason is as laid down on page 49. Clause 58(4) says:

"This Act extends to England and Wales only."

My hon. Friend has already broken that by referring to the United Kingdom in schedule 2. I shall be grateful for my hon. Friend's answer to that when he winds up. I hope that he will find it possible to say that it should be "United Kingdom" in both instances. I do not see why someone with an office in Scotland should be excluded. I see no Scottish hon. Members present, otherwise I might get some support on that issue.

Mr. John Fraser: There is a practical point here. One sometimes needs leave to serve out of the jurisdiction of the landlord in Scotland. If the landlord has an address in England or Wales, one can start proceedings without any procedural impediment.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: The hon. Gentleman confirms my view that the country would be better off without lawyers. He knows that I do not mean that personally. As there are more non-lawyers than lawyers in the House, that should be a popular remark.

I should like to make three final points, two of which will need changes in the Bill. I hope that when he replies to the debate my hon. Friend will give us his preliminary view.

My first point relates to my constituency and to blocks of flats called the Etons. I have had what I regard as an impertinent letter from a firm of solicitors called Higby Hargreaves. Suddenly, residents in these blocks of flats have been told that they must pay for the privilege of parking their cars in the forecourt. The residents have said that that has never happened in all the years that they have been there. I wrote and queried this and received a response which I do not regard as a response that a Member of Parliament ought to receive. The letter says:

"Thank you for your letter of the 24th of March. Our clients are extremely surprised.

You are obviously under a misapprehension as to the situation and true facts in relation to the parking facilities at the Etons. For your information the position is set out below.

Our clients Linthaven Limited hold a long leasehold interest in certain areas in the grounds of the Etons. The Lease is held from the owners of the freehold and landlords Shellpoint Trustees Limited with whom our clients have no connection whatsoever.

Our clients Lease was drafted and prepared with the rights of flat owners in mind to the extent that such rights exist."

How very odd that somebody should sell the lease of bits of the ground to a third party with whom it is said that he is unconnected. I have a suspicious mind and I believe that it was done quite deliberately in order to get round limitations on regulated rents and service charges, and to find another way that would probably take them outside the present Rent Acts and regulations. The letter says that as my constituent

"will no doubt tell you the form of Lease applicable to the flats at the Etons does not grant the flat owners and occupiers any specific parking rights. In fact the Lease includes words which in the opinion of Counsel prohibit car parking on the estate.

Notwithstanding the absence of specific rights car parking has taken place over the years on a haphazard and uncontrolled basis including use by non-residents."

I have known those blocks of flats for 40 years. If there were no parking rights, how odd it is that up to now no one has tried to do anything about it. There have certainly been no complaints from the people who live there. The letter goes on:

"This may have benefited some residents but has also probably been to the disadvantage of others who would like the regular use of a reserved space. Although there are some 360 flats at the Etons there are spaces for only approximately 80 vehicles. Clearly some form of control is needed."

Doubtless that control will be charged for at very high rates. The letter continues:

"It is important to note that our clients agents . . ."—

we have another agent here—

" . . . Aspen Estates have received no less that 26 applications for Licences for reserved spaces to date."

I was trying to think of a kinder word than blackmail but I cannot think of one.

Mr. John Fraser: Whitemail.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No, that would bring me into the realms of something called the Race Relations Board.

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

Hon. Members will appreciate the pressure on people who are told that action will be taken against those who do not buy a parking space. The letter goes on:

"A number of spaces have been reserved by our clients free of charge for disabled residents as stated in the circular letter sent . . . Should it transpire that certain residents are indeed able to establish that they have the right to park a vehicle then an exception will of course be made to the new scheme in appropriate cases."

The firm of Higby Hargreaves says that it has had counsel's opinion. Now it says that perhaps that opinion is wrong, but if it is wrong those who challenge it, not everybody, will get some sort of exception. The next part of the letter shows the ignorance of the firm that has written it. It says:

"Neither we nor our clients can see that the matter has any relevance whatsoever to the debate concerning service charges and long leaseholders in Parliament on the 30th of March next. Indeed our clients feel that your efforts would be better directed in endeavours to increase parking facilities in the locality as a whole."

Mr. John Patten: Impertinence.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: It is impertinence. It shows the ignorance of those solicitors. They should know that Parliament cannot create parking spaces — that is the responsibility of Camden borough council. The letter might mean that the firm wishes me to ignore the views expressed to me by a large number of my constituents who reside there. I should like to know whether there is a way of stopping this Machiavellian method of getting more income and whether my ministerial colleagues will at least consider this aspect before the Bill is debated in the other place.

My second point is equally serious. It concerns the London borough of Camden, which is substantially increasing parking and garage charges on council estates only for those council tenants who have bought their council property. This, again, is discrimination. I should like to know whether Camden can be stopped either by existing legislation or by measures in the Bill. We must stop this unscrupulous method of penalising those who have exercised the right which Parliament gave them and which, as the hon. Member for Norwood said, is no longer a matter of dispute, except where there are areas of scarcity, but this cannot apply where sales have already taken place. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that point.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the hon. Gentleman consider another anomaly which appears to have arisen for people who have bought their homes in relation to VAT on garages? A council tenant does not pay VAT on a garage when he purchases his home, but a person who becomes an owner-occupier must.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I note that the hon. Gentleman is now returning to his Front-Bench place as a Whip. I sympathise with what he says. I imagine that because one case involves a sale to a tenant and the other to an outsider, different regulations apply. Because I am not responsible for policy-making, I must leave that point to my ministerial colleagues. They will doubtless say that this is a matter for the Treasury and will refer it to the Treasury. I hope that a way around this can be found to put people on the same equitable basis.

I come to my third point. I am sure that, because we have plenty of time, the House will not mind if I continue.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall certainly give way this time. If I was less than polite earlier to the hon. Gentleman, I apologise.

Mr. Raynsford: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I wanted to ask him whether he felt that, having chided me for having made long speeches — I think my longest speech was 18 minutes — and having reached 30 minutes himself, he might withdraw that earlier remark.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: In this case it is quality, not quantity. The hon. Gentleman has made many more long speeches than me.

I come to my last points. The hon. Member for Walsall, North, who has now left the Chamber, raised an old canard and tried to imply that the Government were planning to remove security of tenure from private tenants as soon as they could. My hon. Friend the Minister knocked that one down for about the 33rd time. This sort of scare tactic is not confined to the hon. Member for Walsall, North. The Camden housing aid centre, which is part of Camden borough council, sent a long letter and a questionnaire to every private tenant. Among a lot of other verbiage the letter said:

"The Government is proposing to limit Housing Benefit on 'unreasonable' private sector rents. This means that the Council may not be able to pay you if your rent is not registered by the Rent Officer and is seen as too high."

The letter asked tenants to respond, but it failed to say that the council already has the power if the rent is not registered to refer it to the rent officer for registration. If there is any problem, therefore, Camden has the right to do that. If the borough council has not done so, it has failed in its duty and unnecessarily scared a substantial number of tenants. That is appalling. Tenants in Camden should read and re-read the letters which they receive from Camden borough council, most of which are based on half truths.

I hope that, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, the Bill will be passed quickly. I hope that he will add other clauses to it and will specifically consider my two suggestions. I wish the Bill well.

4.55 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I hope that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has not opened a loophole for other private landlords or managing agents. I am thinking particularly of the parking spaces in front of the block of flats where I live. I hope that what he said does not happen there. I very much agree with his point, but I hope that other people do not jump on to that bandwagon. I hope that that idea is shot down quickly.

I should like to add my congratulations to the members of the Nugee committee, including of course Mr. Nugee himself. I congratulate also the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), the Minister's predecessor, who set up the committee, and the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), who has done a great deal and whose persistence with 10-minute Bills on common ownership is well known to me. I was pleased to sponsor his legislation on a number of occasions. The hon. Gentleman must be delighted to be welcoming this legislation.

I intervened—the Minister must have good hearing to have heard me—to say that it was a bit late in the Session to introduce this legislation. I welcomed the commitment to bring in the Bill which was expressed in the Queen's Speech, but we are almost into April. We shall, therefore, need to get our skates on to get it passed. I promise that the Bill will not be held up by the alliance, but I think that the Minister must agree that its introduction is late.

The greatest number of leasehold flats, as the Minister said, is in London, but the number is growing elsewhere, as is the dissatisfaction of long leaseholders. I can think of at least half a dozen blocks in my constituency where the leaseholders are dissatisfied. I declare an interest as the owner of a long leasehold, purpose-built flat in a block which is well known to several other hon. Members and is not far from the Palace of Westminster. I was originally a statutory tenant with a very satisfactory landlord. Suddenly, some 10 years ago, the tenants read that the block had been sold, then sold again and, for all I know, sold several times since. I certainly do not know who the present freeholders are, although I agree that I have not tried very hard to find out. Now, under the Bill, I can find out if I wish to do so. The freeholders were certainly at one time registered in the Channel Islands.

Everything is done through the freeholders' appointed agents. It has taken many years of hard-endeavour by a few people holding office in our tenants' association—I pay tribute to them—to sort out matters so that the current position is, on the whole, reasonably satisfactory. It has taken many years to achieve, but we now feel that we are treated more fairly and honestly. We have had to appoint other agents to check what the landlords' agents were doing and had to pay substantial fees. We have had the chance to check and re-check figures which have been provided for us many times. A number of loopholes have been discovered and many things have been put in order. On the whole, the matter has been resolved reasonably satisfactorily. I shall not name the agents, who are well known in this part of London.

Our greatest concern has lain with the ever-increasing service charges, the maintenance costs and the establishment and future control of a sinking fund. A sinking fund has now been established. The Bill covers these matters, or will do so under the promised regulations, and is therefore much to be welcomed. Part I, dealing with the notice of sale and counter notice, is extremely complicated and needs reading with much care. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) clearly demonstrated that. I suspect that the block in which I live is split almost 50/50 between long leaseholders and statutory tenants, so presumably we might not qualify if we wished as tenants to buy the freehold of the block.

I am not entirely clear about the role of the rent assessment committee covered by clause 13. It certainly seems to be required to fill the need for arbitration in the case of a defective lease, but can it, in dispute, fix the price of the freehold interest? I suspect not. How would that be done? Is it not a matter for the lands tribunal? That seems to be the appropriate body. I can foresee arguments about that going on ad infinitum, with valuers for the landlord putting in one price, and valuers for the tenants putting in another. Will the rent assessment committee fix that price? I have read the clause carefully, but that is not clear. I am not sure about it, but I am told by the Opposition Front Bench that it is the job of the Committee. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that in his winding-up speech.

I am also told that there is a possible loophole whereby landlords may be able to set themselves up as registered charities. I believe that that was mentioned by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate. That exemption is included in clause 4 of the Bill, and it seems to be inviting trouble.

I welcome part II, as long as it means what I think it means. Some managing agents are literally appalling, and the speech made by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate confirmed that. Such agents deserve to be sacked. Does the definition of what comprises management need tightening? I think it does.

Clause 40, which deals with the rights of tenants to be consulted about the appointment of managing agents, does not appear to cover the grounds for their dismissal, except in cases in which they are under reappointment. The clause is very loosely worded.

I also commend part III, although the 90 per cent. qualification rule in clause 24(3)*(c)* will be a difficult one to meet in many cases.

Parts IV, V and VI cover most of the recommendations contained in Nugee—and, in some cases, go beyond them—although no mention is made of the right to extend the terms of a lease which is nearing expiration. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) went into that matter in great depth, and I promise him our support if he can table amendments to the Bill in Committee on this issue. While the Bill is before the House, the matter of a lease that is nearing expiration should be considered. I suspect that I shall be told that that is outside the scope of the Bill, but we now have an opportunity to take action on the expiration of leases, and we should do something about that now.

There are also problems of forfeiture for a lessee who loses a legal dispute with the landlord, and we trust that a few other matters will receive attention as part of the civil law review that the Lord Chancellor's Department is undertaking.

We are disappointed not to see certain other measures included in the Bill, of which two were suggested by the committee of inquiry itself. Nugee urged the Government to amend housing legislation so as to enable local authorities to apply to blocks of flats the minimum housing standards that already relate to houses. That is in paragraph 8.14 of the report. It is interesting to note that that proposal has been endorsed by the city of Westminster, which also proposes that the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act should cover residents and visitors. Nugee also recommended that all service charge moneys that have been collected but not yet expended should be held in a trust account with suitable safeguards. That is in paragraph 8.16 of the report.

One or two other omissions also disappointed us. We had hoped for a right for lessees in a wholly leasehold block to manage the property for themselves, and for guidelines for the preparation and annual updating of five-year estimates of expenditure that would take into account a schedule of major works. Such a programme is especially necessary when there is no sinking fund. We also want a right of veto for tenants who are opposed to works that constitute further development within the curtilage of the block. That is going on now with penthouse developments in certain parts of London in particular. Nugee

[Mr. Stephen Ross]

recommended a code of guidance; I know that city of Westminster officials have prepared one, and I congratulate them on that.

I am not sure about the position of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, of which I happen to be a member. Its draft code of guidance has not yet been produced, but one is necessary in the current situation.

A great strength of the Bill is that its principal innovations have been given most thorough consideration. The right of first option, the provision for appointing a receiver and manager and the provisions for amending defective leases are enlightened reforms. They show the Government's recognition that the balance of rights in a block of flats must be adjusted to reflect the balance of financial commitment in the equity. The detailed drafting of the Bill should do much to ensure that its beneficiaries are those who occupy the flats and not the speculators who trade in people's homes and strip them of their assets as if they were ordinary commodities.

By comparison, those parts of the Bill that deal with service charges seem tentative and imprecise. We hope that it will be possible to enhance the Bill's effectiveness in that area in Committee.

All in all, the Bill promises to be a civilising influence in the jungle of property speculation and is greatly to be welcomed; I welcome it on behalf of the whole alliance.

5.7 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I am pleased to be able to make a contribution on this happy occasion. I should like to thank hon. Members for their generous remarks about my own campaign to help people living in privately-owned flats. I should like to say, too, that I have been much helped by hon. Members in all parts of the House and to mention particularly the support I have had from the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who has consistently supported my campaigns for more than 10 years for various reforms affecting tenants. I am grateful to him and to all hon. Members who have supported and advised me from time to time.

I would like to take a further opportunity of congratulating Nugee and his committee on an excellent job, and in particular the Minister on coming forward with this well drafted Bill so quickly after the Nugee recommendations were made. When we saw that the Queen's Speech contained an undertaking that a Bill on these lines was coming forward, of course, we all rejoiced; but I do not think that we blame the Department for taking some time in producing the Bill. Indeed, we still await some clauses that have not yet appeared, which I am sure will be welcome when they do.

The Minister is to be congratulated on other things—particularly in going beyond Nugee and adding the provision for opening up the statutory right to buy, which is obviously a landmark; and also on obtaining all-party support for the Bill. I congratulate him on the work he has done to make certain that the whole House is behind this measure, and is seen to be behind it. Continuity of policy is absolutely vital for the proper management of property. It is in the interests of all concerned that we should know what we think and make our views known quite clearly to the country.

If I have a criticism of the Bill, it is that it does not go quite far enough. It is not a very severe criticism, because we still have a lot to learn when we see how the Bill works in actual practice. As a result of a boundary revision I became the hon. Member for North Kensington, in 1974. It brought home to me immediately that there was something fundamentally wrong with the relationships betwen landlords and tenants, particularly in the private sector, because the cost of accommodation was so hard for many people to find, but particularly because the status of tenants in relation to landlords seemed to me to be an utter anachronism. My observation was that tenants, for some reason, were regarded as second-rate citizens; it was not thought necessary to treat them as people with first-class rights in the property in which they lived.

It is 900 years since the Norman conquest, and, as I have said in the House before, it really is time that we stopped playing Normans and Saxons where property is concerned. Tenants do not belong to a second-rate social stratum. Even long leaseholders—until this Bill—have found themselves at a disadvantage in dealing with the freeholders and their managing agents. This is something that the House is now putting right, and it is an important development.

On the question of the status of the tenants, when I was first entrusted with the responsibility of representing north Kensington I devised what I thought could be adopted as completely new standard forms of tenure, which would put the owners of the property and the residents in the property on to an equal footing. First, I conceived the shorthold idea, which I think I introduced to the House for the first time in 1976, and which then became part of statute law in 1980. I rather regret that at that time we did not have all-party consensus on the reform of housing law, and the shorthold idea has not really taken root. It was controversial at the time, and there is still a good deal of suspicion that, after some change of Government at some time in the future, shortholders might find themselves being enfranchised; the landlords, who had thought that they could count on getting vacant possession of their property at the end of the shorthold period, might then discover that they were stuck—and never able to get vacant possession again. I hope that shorthold will take root, because it offers a facility for the many people who want decent accommodation and want to know where they stand, but do not look for permanent tenure.

I also thought of the idea of a new, standard longhold tenure, and I regret that I have not proceeded as far as I should have liked with that idea. The Department of the Environment has tumbled to the fact that we need a mechanism to reform the conditions on which long leases are drafted, and part IV provides for the revision of unsatisfactory clauses in long leases. That is an admirable development and I am sure that many owners and residents will be glad to have the chance to revise the terms of leases granting long tenure even when there is no question of outright purchase.

I also thought of a form of tenure that I call commonhold, which would be particularly useful for people living in large conversions and mansion blocks. The House must concede that living in a flat is not the same as living in a house in a street that happens to have been built perpendicularly. A resident of a flat has different responsibilities to his neighbours from those that the resident of a house has to other people in the same street, and it seemed to me that we needed to establish a permanent, satisfactory and equal relationship between the owner of a block and the occupants of the flats in it.

After studying the matter, I concluded that the only lasting solution to the endless disputes about which I was hearing so much would be for the tenants to establish a company with the right to buy the whole property, so that they could act as their own landlords, but in a special relationship that would protect the rights of individuals as well as looking after the property.

Mr. John Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and I was also grateful for his kind remarks. I could have sat here and listened to them all afternoon.

Is my hon. Friend aware that the Lord Chancellor has set up, under the chairmanship of a Law Commissioner, an inquiry into the possibility of strata title and condominium-style arrangements? Would not that be part and parcel of my hon. Friend's commonhold approach?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I am grateful for the opportunity to explain my views, because I have given this aspect some study. Under my proposal for a commonhold arrangement, everyone who was a resident and had a splinter of the whole property would also appear on the other side as one of the shareholders in the company that owned the property. My invented word "commonhold" seemed to me to describe that two-sided relationship.

The idea of a flying freehold is an attempt to eliminate the owner of the block, so that, like a street of freehold houses, the block consists of people who own their own property in their own right. I know that the Lord Chancellor is working on a formula to make covenants positive, so that, when someone acquires a strata title or a flying freehold, he accepts certain obligations to the people living alongside him in the block. It would probably never be necessary to impose such obligations on the freeholders of houses, because they do not have such a close relationship with other residents in their street.

It would not be fair for the Lord Chancellor and his team to pinch the word, "commonhold", as I understand that they are thinking of doing, to describe the new concept that they may introduce. Flying freeholds, as practised in Australia and elsewhere, give the resident of a flat complete independence. The intention is to eliminate the landlords and not to retain them in the form of a landlord company of which the tenants constitute part owners.

Before my hon. Friend the Minister intervened I was saying that I welcome the idea of a tenants' company, rather than a partnership or a loose arrangement developing out of a coffee morning and turning into a band of friends with a common purpose. The limited company is a well-understood concept; people know that a company must produce annual reports and proper accounts and have a board of directors, shareholders and so on.

I believe that it would be advisable to set up the owners of even a very small property in the form of a company, though the Bill does not specify that possibility. I think that it is necessary, both for the proper management of the finances of a commonhold property, and for the proper management of the premises, which will require continuity of competent, if not qualified, professional advice and supervision.

I know that building socieites welcome the idea of flying freeholds because they are the nearest thing to freehold houses, which are the type of property on which the societies are most used to making advances. However, I have been warned that flying freeholds have been found difficult in practice in Australia and I suspect that this will be an inadequate formula for the older blocks, where the most serious problems are likely to arise. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that aspect.

Where the cost of accommodation is concerned, we cannot defy market forces indefinitely. The application of rent controls over a long period has tended to diminish the supply of property and has exacerbated the unhappy relationships between owners and residents. Although we cannot defy market forces indefinitely, we can legitimately modify market conditions to some extent.

I should like to say just a word about the possibility of decontrolling rents. The House will welcome the categorical statement of my hon. Friend the Minister, who repeated earlier today what he has said before on this subject. We should reassure people living in flats that nothing in the Bill is likely to add enormously to the cost of their accommodation.

A diver cannot remain at the bottom of the sea indefinitely, because there is something unnatural about living at the bottom of the sea. There is also something unnatural about living in a housing market that is subject to Government control. However, just as we cannot bring up a diver too quickly, because he will die if we do so, we must not attempt to decontrol rents suddenly—in a big bang—because, if we did, we should kill a lot of people who would not be able to find the money to pay for their accommodation and would have to make sudden changes in their way of life, which would be unwelcome and socially unacceptable.

However, as we move towards new forms of tenure and try to encourage the building of new flats, we must find ways of enabling tenants to pay. I do not welcome big subsidies from here or there, and obviously the ideal way is to increase the supply of property so that the balance of supply and demand reaches a satisfactory equilibrium. However, we shall not reach that point for some time and we have to find for those people who are living in rented accommodation an equivalent of the mortgage interest relief, which puts people in a better position to buy a freehold than to become a tenant. I am not sure that I can see in the Bill an easy place to interpolate a reform of the tax structure affecting people living in flats or contemplating building them. However, we must achieve an equal balance between the option to purchase and the option to rent.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is thinking about improving the mechanisms under which landlords and tenants operate, and I should like to see a code of practice for managing agents. I hope that proposals will be made by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors or the Department of the Environment. It will not be easy, because the conditions in large and small blocks, old and new blocks and blocks with different forms of tenure—mixed regimes and so on—are so very variable. But an accepted code of practice would help managing agents, and would also assist the courts to decide whether agents were falling down on their responsibilities.

I should also like to see a standard memorandum and articles for commonhold companies. The Department may consider acting to bring out such documents — or at least stimulating their production by company law experts. In my series of Bills I suggested a draft memorandum and articles which tenants' associations could easily adopt, and which would guide them in the running of the company

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that owned the property on behalf of the residents. That would also assist developers thinking of putting new properties on the market on a basis that would conform to the idea of commonhold ownership from the start.

We should give more thought to the point made by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) about the right to extend a lease. Many of my constituents are concerned about that; however, it immediately brings up the question of the life span of the property. In Kensington a number of blocks are reaching the point where it would probably be better to demolish them than to spend hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of pounds on extending their life for a few years. However, it is difficult to obtain the agreement of all concerned to a demolition; even reaching the decision that demolition should take place in 10, 20 or 30 years is not at all easy. I therefore welcome the fact that the Nugee committee drew attention to the need for the setting up of sinking funds. I hope that the tax background for tenants' companies or associations to set up such funds will be favourable, so that there is enough money to solve the problems that will arise when the blocks are demolished.

Finally, let me say a few words about the right to buy. In my earlier Bills I invariably relied on the right to buy by a properly constituted tenants' association as the solution to the problems that, unfortunately, are all too common in large conversions and mansion blocks. The Government's compromise is to confine the right to buy to the residents by exercising their right of pre-emption, and also—for the long leaseholders—at the direction of the court. I feel that that is a satisfactory resting place for the time being.

I understand that it is the Government's view that a long leaseholder is someone who has already acquired a substantial stake in the property by agreement with the owner, which a short-term tenant will not have done. A long leaseholder is therefore a rather different type of resident from, for instance, a statutory tenants who has not put out any capital as a starting point in the negotiation. I rather think that the same consideration underlay the Labour party's decision in its own leasehold reform, giving the right of enfranchisement for houses in 1967.

I understand the logic of that decision and there is a great deal to be said in favour of it. In the course of time, however, the courts will no doubt extend by precedent the conditions in which residents are enabled to obtain judgments in their favour when they are seeking to buy their properties. We can only wait and see how case law develops over the years.

I think it will not be unsatisfactory if the movement towards ownership by the residents is somewhat slow in maturing. Some people, if they were given the right to buy immediately, might overreach themselves in their enthusiasm to end an unhappy relationship with the landlord. Having obtained the money to buy the property, they might then discover that they had not enough money to make it into a satisfactory place in which to live. The last thing that we want is to find in a few years' time that tenants associations all over London — and in other parts of the country—have acquired their properties and then come to wish that they had not, because they were not able to afford to keep it up or did not appreciate the difficulties of managing a mansion block to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Let us therefore leave it to the courts for the time being to discern the circumstances in which tenants can make a success of owning their properties and it is in the interests of all concerned that they should have the right to buy despite any reluctance to sell on the part of the landlord.

Along with other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I believe that it is vital for us to pass the Bill as quickly as possible. I wish it a happy passage.

5.25 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): This is the only housing legislation that we shall consider in the current Session. That should be seen in the context of the designation of 1987 by the United Nations as the international year of shelter for the homeless. An important question is posed: are the Government doing all that they could, or should, to tackle the fundamental problem presented by the astronomical rise in homelessness? The urgency of that problem has been placed in context by the designation of this week as national housing week. A series of activities is taking place, starting from today, to highlight the extent of housing needs and housing deprivation in London and in other parts of the country.

It is a sad comment on the Government's record that the international year of shelter for the homeless will almost certainly see the highest level of homelessness in Britain since records began shortly after the end of the last war. It will almost certainly also see more homeless families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation than ever before. Such people are subjected to appalling and often slum-like conditions. They are exposed to severe risks of fire and other accidents, and overcrowding makes it difficult for them to lead any kind of real family life. But —here is the final insult—for all the horror and blight that such conditions cast on the lives of those families, it costs the state far more to keep them in such accommodation than it would to build new houses. The surge in the number of homeless people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and in the cost of that accommodation, is an extraordinary comment on the impact of the Government's housing policies after eight years in office.

The country is spending more and more money on lining the pockets of greedy landlords running bed-and-breakfast establishments of a very poor standard, exploiting the misery of the homeless and ripping off the state into the bargain.

The fact that Government policy has led to such circumstances can only be described as deplorable. It is the politics of the loony Right to go on subsidising the landlords of bed-and-breakfast hovels, rather than building the houses that we know are needed. We have the worst level of housebuilding in the public sector recorded in any peace-time year since the end of the first world war, and yet more families are living in those appalling conditions. If ever there was a comment on the lunacy — the loony Right ideology — of the Government's policies it is reflected in those figures.

Measures should have been taken this year to tackle the housing crisis and to control standards in bed-and-breakfast and other multi-occupied establishments. My hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) introduced a private Member's Bill to try to

tackle these problems. Had the Government been prepared to give it time, something would have been done about those problems. However, the Government have neglected the real problems of our time and have allowed the crisis to become even worse.

The reason for acute homelessness is the shortage of rented accommodation. Since this Government have been in office, the number of homes that are available to rent in Britain has declined by about 1 million. It has been the steepest ever decline in our history. That is a shameful record and it has now come home to roost. This Bill tries to tackle some of the abuses and problems that arise in certain parts of the housing market. However, we also need measures that will lead to an increase in the supply of rented housing to meet the needs of so many people who, without the provision of homes to rent, will become homeless.

Why is there such a shortage of homes to rent? The Government are in an unfortunate position. Ideologically, they believe that if it were given the opportunity, the free market would provide housing. However, Conservative Members know only too well that it does not work like that. Their 1957 measure led to the greatest ever loss of housing in the rented market, plus the arrival of Mr. Rachman and his infamous exploitation of tenants. When they were elected, this Government promised that they would stimulate the private rented market by a series of measures, including the shorthold tenancies that had been advocated for many years by the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams).

I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's wish to try to stimulate the private rented market by the introduction of shorthold tenancies, but the reason for the failure of shorthold tenancies does not lie in the explanation that he offered — that the measure has been politically controversial. The reason for the failure of shorthold tenancies is that no landlord who is able to let accommodation and obtain a far higher rent without the tenant enjoying security of tenure would dream of letting under the shorthold conditions that the hon. Gentleman advocated and that the Housing Act 1980 brought on to the statute book. In London at the moment, many landlords are letting accommodation on terms that evade the provisions of the Rent Acts and that enable them to charge extortionate rents and deny any rights to tenants. While freedom to exploit tenants exists, very few landlords will let their property on conditions that are subject to regulation.

If there is a free market, as Conservative Members in their ideological conviction wish, the outcome leads inexorably and inevitably to the greatest exploitation of shortage: the bed-and-breakfast hotel. The bed-and-breakfast hotel is very much the symbol of the free market. It is where the largest amount of profit can be made by landlords who exploit the misery of the homeless. I am afraid that that is the answer to a Government who believe that all we have to do is to free the private market and housing will be provided. Instead, there is squalor, exploitation and human misery.

The Government, with their strange ideological views, say that action is needed to stimulate private landlords to produce lettings. However, in the glossy promotional leaflets that they produce for other reasons, the Government try to pretend that there is no crisis. The other day I came across an extraordinary Government document that deals with the proposal to establish a Community trade marks office in the docklands area. In this glossy promotional leaflet that extols the virtues of locating the trade marks office in Britain—a principle that I fully support — I could not but notice an extraordinary comment on housing and the justification given for coming to docklands, which was because of the housing to be found there. It says:

"Inexpensive housing is available in plenty both in and out of London."

If the Government believe that that is so, how do they reconcile it with the number of homeless families who are living in bed-and-breakfast hotels? Have they ever thought that there is a conflict between the reality of life in London at the moment and the image that is presented in their glossy brochures?

Conservative Members put forward another argument about the supply of rented housing: that if landlords were able to obtain a reasonable return on their investment they would provide more homes. The properties that are the subject of this Bill disprove their case overwhelmingly. The evidence of the past 20 years shows exactly what happens when landlords are enabled to maximise their return. They do not continue to let their property. Wherever possible, they try to break up mansion blocks and to sell as many of them as possible to maximise their capital gain.

The history that has been documented by the Nugee committee is the history of exploitation by landlords, often the very unscrupulous ones who were named by the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg). They began that process in the 1960s. Probably there were others before them, but for the first time they achieved public notoriety in the 1960s.

In recent years, their successors have seized on the opportunity to buy properties on a rising property market when capital values were increasing. Flats have been left empty—the vacancy rate is appalling—and when capital values have been at their highest landlords have seized the opportunity to sell them and make a capital gain, despite the fact that rent levels in many of these properties was very high. Many of my constituents who live in mansion blocks are paying through the teeth for the pleasure of living in them. Despite that, the owners of mansion blocks have had no incentive to continue to let their property. They have tried to break them up and make capital gains. By doing so, they have reduced the amount of accommodation that is available to rent.

We need to consider the extent to which the measures in this Bill will address the problems. They go some way towards tackling some of the problems that face tenants who are renting accommodation in blocks of flats. However, they do not tackle some of the other fundamental problems to which I have referred — homelessness or empty housing. I am sorry that the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction is not in the Chamber at the moment. He has the interesting habit of leaving the Chamber when I speak on housing matters. I hope that there is no connection between those two facts. He spoke on the radio this morning about empty property. His justification for the Government's policy of not doing more for the homeless was that if only empty council properties were brought back into use the problem would be solved.

The answer is very different. There are too many empty council properties and something must be done about it, but local authorities are by no means the worst offenders. The owners of mansion blocks keep far more properties

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empty than does any local authority in London. The worst offenders of all are Government Departments. The figures show that 6·5 per cent. of Government Department property is empty, compared with 3·5 per cent. of empty local authority property.

The Metropolitan police figures are a disgrace. The answers that the Home Secretary has given to my parliamentary questions during the past month reveal that, of 3,203 residential properties owned by the Metropolitan police, 573 are vacant. That is a vacancy rate of 18 per cent. The Home Secretary ought to be ashamed of that. So should the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Housing. They should stop criticising local authorities and others for keeping property empty until they have put their own house in order. If they do not, everybody will know that they are being hypocritical and that, although they are accusing others of keeping property empty, they have by far the worst record.

Mr. Stephen Ross: Has the hon. Gentleman included prison officers' housing? At one time, more than 100 prison officers' houses in my constituency were vacant.

Mr. Raynsford: As I do not have a prison in my constituency, I have not pursued that matter, but I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has been doing so in relation to properties adjoining Wormwood Scrubs prison. I gather from my hon. Friend that there is a severe problem relating to prison officers' housing, although the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) — who has constituency experience of it — will know more about the extent of the problem than I do.

Mr. John Fraser: Brixton prison is on the edge of my constituency. Not only are there many vacant prison officers' houses, but when a prison officer dies in service the Home Office sets about evicting his widow.

Mr. Raynsford: That is right. The Government encourage homelessness by leaving properties empty and compound the problem by making homeless the people who live in such accommodation.

We have had enough of listening to the pious platitudes of the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, who has presided over an appalling crisis of homelessness and has done little or nothing to tackle it. He is guilty of the grossest hyprocrisy in accusing local authorities of keeping too many properties empty—and I agree that there is a problem — when he has a far greater problem in his own back yard.

The Bill is designed to facilitate the acquisition by tenants of the ownership of their flats under certain circumstances. They will have the right of first refusal if the landlord decides to sell, and compulsory acquisition powers will apply in certain circumstances. Those compulsory acquisition powers will be somewhat tortuous and difficult to put into effect, because a number of conditions will have to be met to the satisfaction of a court. The landlord must be in breach of one or more of the obligations owed to the leaseholder, the circumstances must be such that the breach is likely to continue, and the problems must be unlikely to be adequately remedied by the appointment of a manager under part II of the Bill.

Those three conditions will provide a golden opportunity for a landlord who wishes to evade the provisions of the Bill to do so. They will provide endless opportunities for prevarication, and some landlords will pretend that action is being taken to remedy problems when it is not. They will involve lengthy legal procedures that will be very costly to the tenants, who will have no guarantee of success at the end.

Although I regard the Bill as a step in the right direction, I am far from satisified that it will give tenants and leaseholders who have been subjected to injustice, and who have suffered unhappiness at the hands of their landlord in the past, the swift remedy that they deserve. Labour Members prefer the concept of a much more straightforward procedure that allows leaseholders, either individually or collectively, to acquire the full interest in the property. We are pledged to extend tenants' rights in that way, and it is important that people should know that we have been in the forefront in this regard.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate talked about his contribution in introducing the Housing Act 1980. He is only too well aware that most of the provisions relating to tenants' rights in the 1980 Act had already been prepared by the Labour party in 1979. The Government inherited measures put forward by the Labour party that would have been introduced had Labour remained in office.

We seek simpler and more straightforward measures to enable the occupiers of blocks of flats to acquire possession of their properties. They should not have to go through the complex procedure of satisfying a court that a landlord has fallen down on his obligations and that the problem is not likely to be remedied by any other measure. Equally, there should be provision for the finance to be made available to help tenants to acquire their blocks. A great deal could be done to encourage tenants to take co-operative control of a block that has been badly managed when, given the opportunity, they could do a far better job themselves.

Today I had the pleasure of taking part in a visit to various sites in central London organised by the Campaign for Homes in Central London. The aim was to illustrate the current problems confronting people looking for housing. We saw a successful housing co-operative in operation—interestingly, in what were originally police houses. The co-operative is organising its own affairs very successfully and wants to acquire an adjoining site to provide more housing, but it is being thwarted by the reluctance of the London residuary body to make the land available at an affordable price. There is a strong case for enabling co-operatives to take over control.

I question the ability of the county courts to carry out satisfactorily the functions that the Bill gives them. They would have to deal not only with compulsory acquisition powers but with the appointment of managers and with various variations in the terms of other leases. There are many grounds for believing that county courts are already overburdened with the obligation to deal efficiently with housing cases and that, in many cases, people do not benefit from the standard of justice that they deserve. In the past, a case has been made for new specialist housing courts that could examine housing matters in rather more detail, and with greater expertise than the county courts.

The Nugee committee recommended that housing assessors should be available within the framework of the county courts. We have no evidence as to whether the Government are considering housing assessors, but we have evidence that the Lord Chancellor's Department is

not keen on the establishment of housing courts. Indeed, it has rejected that proposal and is considering less satisfactory options.

Does the Minister believe that the considerable additional responsibilities that the Bill will give to the county courts will be discharged as well as they would be by a specialist housing court? Will he consider the establishment of a housing court to provide a more effective channel for the settlement of landlord-tenant disputes and other housing matters?

I do not wish to incur the wrath of the hon. Member for Hampstead by speaking for too long. In conclusion, therefore, I stress that Labour Members welcome the introduction of the Bill but believe that it has two fundamental weaknesses. First, it does not go far enough to extend the rights of tenants in blocks of flats and, secondly, it does not tackle any of the fundamental housing problems that face us at the moment. The Government try to give the impression of taking action on housing, but they are deafeningly silent on the critical problems of homelessness, overcrowding, lack of investment, decay in the housing stock and the worsening housing crisis over which they are presiding.

5.49 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford) was in danger of making a speech that exceeded his longest to date—although, I am glad to say, only by a minute or two. I feared that he was settling in for a serious attempt to do that.

I welcome the Bill, even though it does not go quite as far as I would like to incorporate the proposals that I put forward in my ten-minute Bill on 25 February. I hope that there will be time for the Government to consider including my proposals, even if there is a shortage of draftsmen's time. Perhaps a shortage of draftsmen's time has prevented that so far, but if we do not have an early election I hope that there will be time to incorporate in this Bill my modest proposals.

I am glad that the Bill is supported by the Opposition parties. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said that the Labour party supports the right to buy. Will he please communicate with Labour party councillors in Bolton who do not appear to have received the message? Those councillors must still be under the influence of the former Member for Bolton, West, Mrs. Taylor, who was the Opposition spokesman for housing. She said that the right to buy would be given over her dead body.

If the Labour party has been converted, I ask the hon. Member for Norwood to tell Bolton councillors because they appear to be the most recalcitrant council in the country in cases of defective title when every other council takes steps to help tenants in that position. I hope that the hon. Member will communicate soon with Bolton councillors. A right-to-buy action group will be meeting on 3 April to ask for a statement from Bolton councillors about the right to buy and Bolton council's obligation to reconsider its position.

It was good to hear from the alliance spokesman, who appears to have departed—perhaps because his party had so little to say before. The recent booklet "The Time has Come" might have included some reference to the right to buy, but it did not. That proves what a low priority the subject has for the alliance.

As a result of introducing my Landlord and Tenant Bill, I have received a number of representations on the subject. I shall now address my remarks to the Government's Bill. Over the years freedoms have been introduced to help people gain more control over their lives. I am pleased that that is particularly so in housing. The Housing Act 1980 gave council tenants the right to buy their homes, at least where there is no defective title, which I attempted to remedy in my Bill.

Schedule 19 of the Housing Act introduces help for leaseholders of private flats in challenging service charges levied by their landlords. The latter provisions and other helpful measures in previous Acts were consolidated in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

For many years there has been pressure from both sides of the House and from all sides of the professions to give more rights to private tenants and leaseholders. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors working party set up in 1983 made recommendations about the management of blocks of flats to the then Minister of Housing, the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley). That committee, headed by Mr. James, the senior surveyor of Grosvenor Estates, included representatives of the Law Society, estate agents, landlords and tenants.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say whether the rights in part V and elsewhere in the Bill for recognised residents' associations to be consulted on the appointment of management agents is also fully available to tenants of public housing. I have spoken recently to residents' associations on council estates and I believe that they should be given full rights to examine all options for the management of their estates.

I have also heard of problems experienced by tenants in shopping precincts. Will the Minister consider extending the rights to cover such tenants? I have experienced a series of problems at Harwood shopping precinct in my constituency where the company under the control of Mr. Horrocks has proved to be unco-operative in its relationship with the tenants.

The James committee called for changes in the law to allow leaseholders to challenge the appointment of managing agents and the cost of fees and insurance premiums, and to provide standardised leases and a system of voluntary arbitration for defective clauses in existing leases. In particular, the James committee called for the creation of sinking funds to cover the cost of renovations and major repairs where there is no provision in leases. It stressed the importance of such funds being held independently and for them to be attached to the block rather than to individual landlords. There have been instances of receivers claiming such funds when a landlord goes into liquidation or goes bankrupt. The committee also said that it was unjust that such funds should be taxed as income. I hope that those points will be noted by the Government in drafting their promised additional amendments to the Bill.

The Nugee committee supported most of the James committee's recommendations, which the Government accepted and added some welcome proposals of their own in drafting their Bill. Part II solidifies the principle which the courts have already implemented in appointing receiver managers to take over the management of blocks when the management has broken down. That is formal acceptance at last of the principle that leaseholders, even

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

with short leases, have a greater interest and therefore a greater investment in the property than the reversionary landlord.

Part III is the natural extension of that principle and gives the right of compulsory purchase when a long-term solution to negligence and mismanagement is required. I believe that some guidance is required on how the ultimate management should be undertaken. It is no good residents jumping out of the frying pan of incompetence into the fire of ignorance and disunity.

Clause 41 gives to housing associations the powers to manage blocks of flats. These may prove useful sources of expertise with which leaseholders could happily co-operate. It is of particular importance for finance to be channelled to housing associations so that they can take on the role on a permanent basis, or as a temporary measure while bringing a block back on the rails. I ask the Government to provide a fund to provide bridging loans for residents to allow them to implement part I's pre-emptive purchase arrangements as well as the compulsory arrangements under part I.

I speak as a leaseholder who has recently joined other residents of a London block in purchasing the freehold voluntarily from the owner. Fortunately, we were in a position to arrange the finance and to be confident of arrangements for the efficient management of the building afterwards. Others may not be so lucky. We should help them and so ensure the success of the Government's legislation.

A number of hon. Members and the Federation of Private Residents' Associations, which represents 200 associations of private tenants throughout the country and was represented on the Nugee committee, would like the Bill to go further. The federation is concerned about flat dwellers in private blocks still being treated as second class citizens, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) said. The federation says that, as council tenants have a right to buy, it would like the powers under parts I and III to be increased for private tenants. The federation is worried about leaseholders whose leases are getting too short to be saleable and would like the Leasehold Reform Act to be extended to flats, especially because of the current research into the legal implications of flying freeholders and their strata titles, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington referred.

My Bill was unopposed and was supported by a former Solicitor-General and two former Environment Ministers. It is designed to extend the council tenant's right to buy when the title is defective. My Bill also intends to give fair market value to landlords when their property is compulsorily purchased. My Bill is truly for landlords and tenants, and I hope that the Government will accept my proposals as amendments to their Bill.

5.58 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Ever since I was elected in 1979 I have been constantly shocked at the problems of long leaseholders living in flats in my constituency. Many of the experiences described to me are nothing short of a scandal. Accordingly, in common with other hon. Members, I introduced a private Member's Bill on the subject. Mine was intended to deal specifically with many of the points covered by the Government's Bill.

When I introduced my Bill I was delighted that the Government responded so quickly. Between the notice of my Bill appearing on the Order Paper and the date on which I was given leave to present it, the Government announced their response to the Nugee report. They did that with such haste that on the day that I left the House to address a meeting of leaseholders in Battersea the written answer, which I had not then received, had arrived at the Battersea Conservative Association offices and I was able to quote it at the meeting. I think that that haste had something to do with the local elections.

Many other aspects of housing worry us. On Wednesday, I hope to have the Minister's support for a private Member's Bill to protect the position of house buyers — that is, owner-occupiers. I hope that the Minister will accept that with the same enthusiasm as he has put forward his present measures.

Over the years I have had frequent meetings with leaseholders in Battersea. I am fully aware that the system has worked best when groups of residents have got together to acquire the title of the flats in their block. They are fairly happy and contented and in contrast to those leaseholders whose difficulties I shall shortly enumerate.

Many long leaseholders in the community by no means represent the well off—some are elderly and others are desperately poor. Many find the additional burdens thrust upon them by freeholders impossible to cope with. In Battersea, leaseholders are to be found in mansion blocks, as described by the Minister, and also in houses that have been converted into flats. That is a fairly common form of tenure in many parts of London.

I shall describe the main complaints that I have received and I shall judge the effectiveness of the Government's proposals in that context. One complaint is that repairs are simply not carried out by the freeholder or, if started, are not completed. The result is that scaffolding remains on the blocks, bits may fall off and, despite the efforts of the leaseholders, they are unable to get the repair job either started or, if started, completed. If there is a dispute between the leaseholders and the freeholder, a leaseholder cannot move because, while a dispute is in progress, nobody wants to buy the lease.

I have received complaints about high service charges. I have also received complaints regarding insurance; and, indeed, the Minister has said that a proposal on this matter will be forthcoming, but not in the Bill.

Mr. John Patten: Because of the extreme complexity of the problem, we have been unable, with the Bill as printed, to introduce the necessary clauses. However, at a later stage, when the Bill is in Committee, we hope to introduce clauses which I hope will be satisfactory to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dubs: I accept the Minister's answer. It is better to have the necessary clauses added to the Bill in Committee.

I have received strong complaints about the size of sinking funds for repairs and the way in which such funds have been managed. Leaseholders have complained that sometimes proper accounts are not available or indeed no form of accounts is available. There is the ever-repeated complaint that the management of some of the blocks is quite unsatisfactory. Sometimes leaseholders are simply unable to make contact with the freeholder. They may be unable to find the freeholder or sometimes the freeholder is not known. A device is sometimes used wherein there is

a head freeholder, then an intermediate leaseholder and then those leaseholders living in the block. The two layers above the leaseholders make it even more difficult for the leaseholders to make contact with the people who own the freehold.

One notorious incident occurred when a small block of flats was bought by a company that paid £800 for the leasehold of each flat. Within weeks the freeholder was offering to sell the leaseholds for more than £6,000 to each of the leaseholders. Sometimes an individual leaseholder has been negotiating to buy the freehold when, in the middle of negotiations, the freeholder has simply decided, unbeknown to the leaseholder, to sell to a property company and has not bothered to tell the leaseholder.

A notorious case in my constituency involved a house which had been converted to three flats. One was empty and the other flats were occupied on leasehold. The empty flat had extremely bad dry rot, but apparently the freeholder had run out of money and could not carry out the repairs. The result was that dry rot was affecting the other flats. The leaseholders were desperate because they were aware that their asset was depreciating day by day, possibly to the point where the building became valueless, but, at the time, there was nothing they could do.

There is also the difficult instance where someone has bought the leasehold and, having moved in, is given, without warning, a hefty repairs bill for a backlog of repairs. It may be argued that in such circumstances the solicitor who carried out the conveyancing should have discovered that problem. Nevertheless, I have received complaints about that.

There have been instances when pensioners, who were ordinary tenants, have been persuaded to safeguard themselves in old age by becoming leaseholders. Once they did so, they discovered they could not afford their repair bills and ended up worse off than if they had remained as tenants. Over and over again one hears the cry that if the only recourse is to go to law, people cannot afford litigation and have doubts as to whether they will be properly covered by legal aid.

I am satisfied that the Bill goes a long way to help to tackle those evils. With this measure the Government are departing from what I regard as their utter free market policy on housing. I welcome this different, somewhat interventionist approach by the Government. It goes against the thrust of Government thinking on other aspects of housing.

I believe that three problems remain which are not adequately dealt with by this measure. They have been referred to in passing by other hon. Members this afternoon. I would like the provision of a full right to buy, provided that a significant number of leaseholders wish to exercise that right. I would prefer that rather than the burden being on the leaseholder to prove that the landlord or freeholder is behaving negligently. That is difficult to prove and may not work in the courts. I would prefer there to be a proper right to buy for leaseholders living in such blocks.

I share the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) about what will happen at the end of long leases. What happens in the last few years of a lease when it is impossible to sell that lease to someone else? People are stuck in a property and are seriously worried about what will happen at the end when they must meet the obligations attached to the expiry of that lease. A right to renew a lease would give people some sense of security, would stop properties becoming dilapidated and, philosophically, be on par with the other aspects, especially the limited right to buy, described by the Minister. I urge the Minister to give people the right to renew a lease in the same way as he has given them a limited right to buy.

I am worried about the existence of mixed forms of tenure in blocks — a mixture of private tenants and leaseholders. The safeguards in this legislation apply to blocks that are occupied by long leaseholders and I do not believe that those safeguards will apply equally where there is a mixture of leaseholder and private tenant. Some tenants have been in blocks for a long time. They may be elderly and may not be in a position to convert their tenure to a leasehold if that is what they desire. However, some may wish to do so, and I believe that it would be better if they had a right to buy as well. Whereas leaseholders will now have a right of say in the management of blocks, tenants will not have that right. I am interested in how the Minister will cope with problems of mixed tenure in such blocks. I hope he will consider that problem sympathetically in Committee.

This Bill is a long overdue reform. It will help long leaseholders, but it does not allow the Minister to escape the fact that there is a major housing crisis in London affecting people in other forms of tenure. I wish the Minister would turn his mind to that problem. Nevertheless, I welcome this reform. I welcome the fact that many long leaseholders in my constituency and elsewhere in the country will be able to face their housing prospects more cheerfully when this Bill is on the statute book.

6.9 pm

Mr. John Fraser: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply on behalf of the Opposition. I shall speak for only a few minutes to underline some of the points that have arisen during the debate.

I hope that the Government will take on board the fears that have been expressed about the ability of the county courts to handle housing cases. Much depends on the quality of the registrar and the judge, and we must have registrars and judges with perhaps a little more training and aptitude to deal with housing cases. They must be prepared to push these cases forward and not allow procedural impediments to hinder justice. If the Minister talks to practitioners, he will find that there is wide variation between one court and another. I found that when I was a consumer Minister and involved in small claims procedures. Some small claims courts work extremely well and others extremely badly. They work badly when the registrar does not enter into the spirit of the small claims court concept. I hope that the Minister will talk to the Lord Chancellor's Department about the most constructive use of registrars and judges in implementing the rights that will be created by the Bill and the other rights that exist in housing law to achieve proper justice for tenants.

Secondly, we shall need to examine——

Mr. Thurnham: The hon Gentleman has spoken so well and so wisely this afternoon that I feel that it will be useful to intervene to say that a quiet word from him to his colleagues in Bolton would be of enormous help in ensuring that tenants obtain the justice that they deserve

[Mr. Thurnham]

and of which they have been deprived. I think that he would find his colleagues only too keen to find an opportunity to get off the hook on which they are caught.

Mr. Fraser: I might take the opportunity to visit Bolton to familiarise myself with the local housing problems. I understand that the problem under the right-to-buy legislation did not stem from resistance by the council. Apparently the council had a great many leasehold interests, and the hon. Gentleman will remember that the 1980 Act did not give the right to buy in such circumstances. I confess that I do not know the detail of the defective title problem that exists in Bolton, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have a chance to make his voice heard in Committee. If the Government are keen enough to deal with these matters, they will provide the right remedy where a council has a defective title and does not want to find itself caught in the middle of a dispute between those who may have a claim on the property and the tenant who has a claim under the right to buy. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will develop the argument constructively in Committee, not now.

Secondly, we must consider the Bill carefully to ensure that its drafting does not provide an opportunity for landlords unreasonably to erect delays in the exercise of tenants' rights. The Minister nods his head in approval, but on Saturday morning I took the opportunity with Mr. David Ward, the prospective parliamentary candidate for Chelsea, to inspect some empty privately-owned properties in Chelsea. There are 8,000 such properties in the Royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea. We looked at six of them, just off the King's Road, which have been empty for about 25 years, and which I am sure merit the Minister's wholesale disapproval.

When the local authority stepped in to make a compulsory purchase order with a view to bringing the homes back into use for housing purposes, the landlord made a few repairs or a desultory start on repairs, with the result that the inquiry and CPO procedure were abandoned. This has happened on many occasions, and when it does a local authority has to take up the issue time and again. We must not have laws that create rights in favour of tenants that can be defeated by token action by the landlord to prevent rights being exercised. This is why I say that we need robust, common-sense registrars and judges who will not be hoodwinked by token responses by landlords and who will allow the rights of tenants to be exercised.

Thirdly, it is important that the Bill should address itself to improvements, deterioration, sinking funds, audits and the necessity to ensure that tenants' funds, especially when placed in sinking funds, are properly protected. Protection can be offered by the setting up of trust funds. It might be as well if the Minister had a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer before he presents the Finance Bill to ensure that the tax treatment of sinking funds is not unfavourable to tenants. The moneys that are directed to sinking funds belong to tenants, not landlords, and they should be regarded as being held on trust for them.

There has emerged from the debate a common view that the right to extend a lease should be granted by legislation, and preferably by the Bill. It is not too difficult to devise such legislation, and it would be within the long title because it would be a variation of the lease. Therefore, an extension would be within the long title. The legislation analogy and precedent is contained in the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. I hope that one of our achievements in Committee will be to add the extension of a lease to the other rights proposed by the Bill.

Finally, it is right that we should try to encourage the collective acquisition of freeholds by long leaseholders and tenants, and especially by long leaseholders. We could start by saying that in all new developments the tenants would automatically have a right to acquire the freehold.

The main and central reason for the division between freehold and leasehold is that our legal system does not allow flats to be disposed of except by means of the grant of a lease. This means that the maximum interest that a tenant can have in a property is a leasehold interest. If the law allowed it and we willed it, the tenant could have an even greater right. He could have his present right of a lease and an inalienable share, along with the lease, in the freehold reversion. We could make a good start by emulating the example of many other countries if at the very least we provided that in new developments that should be the order of things, with that being the constitutional relationship of the tenant or long leaseholder to the land and building upon and in which he lives.

I welcome the Bill, which I hope to improve and extend in Committee. I hope that it makes rapid progress through the House.

6.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): It is a privilege to be called to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), who has great experience of the matters that we are discussing. The degree of consensus that has emerged during the debate should be put on record. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have arrived at a consensus with the possible exception of the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), who chose largely to ignore the Bill and to subject the House to a repeat of many of his well-rehearsed and well-trodden arguments on housing policy in general. That is a pity given the detailed make-up of the Bill and the wide consensus that exists.

The Bill is important to many hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), who has received many representations and made many representations to us on the problems facing his constituents who are living in privately owned flats. The speech of the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) underlined many of the reasons why the Government have thought it necessary to introduce the Bill.

In drafting the Bill our aim has been to maintain a balance between the rightful interests of the residents of flats and those of landlords. The Bill makes clear our commitment to giving flat dwellers the necessary statutory rights to deal with landlords who refuse persistently to meet their obligations under a lease. Equally, we recognise that there are many landlords providing a good service to their tenants and abiding by the terms of their leases. Such landlords have nothing to fear from the Bill. Our aim is to deter bad landlords while giving encouragement to those who are mindful of and responsive to the needs of their tenants. My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) was right to say that, although the Bill may not go as far as some would want, we shall

undoubtedly learn as we go along with it. The Bill will make an important contribution to the many reforming changes that we have already introduced to protect the tenant.

If we were to go as far as the hon. Member for Norwood wishes, there is a real danger that the rights of leaseholders could disappear altogether. If that happened, the system of leasehold as we know it could be in danger of disappearing. That may be the hon. Gentleman's aim but that is not what the Government are seeking to achieve through the Bill, which is intended to establish a fair and stable equilibrium between landlord and tenant.

I seek the indulgence of the House to say a few words on insurance, which is of a special concern to Members who represent constituencies in south Wales. Several Opposition Members representing south Wales constituencies have made representations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself concerning that problem. It is a pity that none of them has been able to take part in the debate this afternoon, particularly the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who has been especially vociferous about the problems facing tenants in connection with insurance. In that respect, I am referring to householders, and in Committee we shall give an undertaking to give leaseholders of houses similar rights in relation to their property's insurance as leaseholders of flats are to be given as a result of the Nugee committee's recommendations.

I am especially pleased that we have undertaken to do that because I am aware from my mailbag, both as a constituency Member and as a Minister, of the difficulties which many leasehold house owners run into over the tied insurance of their houses. Those difficulties most frequently arise as a result of the poor or incompetent management of their leasehold portfolios on the part of a small minority of ground landlords. In common with the main aim of the Bill, the insurance clauses will be designed to help safeguard the interests of leasehold house owners and flat dwellers alike with regard to their tied insurance, while continuing to recognise that landlords must be able to protect their reversionary interest in leasehold property.

I would like to say a little about the way in which our proposals on insurance would work with regard to leasehold house owners. The additional protection we intend to give such leaseholders will take a number of forms. First, our proposals would give leasehold house owners a right to challenge the terms of the insurance they are required by their leases to take out. If a leaseholder can demonstrate that his insurance is unsatisfactory, or that the premiums required are excessive, the court would be empowered to make an order requiring the landlord to nominate a different insurance company from the one originally nominated.

Secondly, in order that leaseholders can mount an effective challenge, they will be entitled to know specific details about the insurance of their homes, including the extent of cover provided by the policy. Leaseholders will also be entitled to inspect the insurance policy, and to take a copy of it.

Thirdly, where the terms of a lease are themselves defective in relation to insurance, leasehold house owners will have a right to apply to the court to have their leases varied. That right will be analogous to the right that leaseholders of flats will be given by part IV of the Bill. It would not be possible for the courts to use this right to vary a lease to take away a landlord's ability to nominate the insurance company, nor to require landlords to offer leaseholders a choice of insurers.

I am sure that those additional rights will be welcomed by leasehold house owners in areas, such as south Wales, with a great number of houses held on leases.

I would like to reply to some of the specific points raised by hon. Members during the debate. The hon. Member for Norwood referred to defective leases. He argued that part IV should be extended to allow tenants to apply to the courts to amend their leases to allow improvements to be made to the block. I am glad to be able to reassure the hon. Gentleman that the Bill already covers that. Clause 36 allows tenants to ask the court to vary the leases, whether or not the variation relates to the defect in the leases, where that is supported by a substantial majority of the parties and not opposed by more than a small minority. That provision should be used, for instance, to seek the setting up of a sinking fund, which was one of the examples cited by the hon. Gentleman.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) asked why clause 44 relates to England and Wales whereas schedule 2 refers to the United Kingdom. Clause 44 requires the landlord to furnish the tenants with an address in England and Wales for the service of notices. That is necessary to ensure that notices in proceedings can be served without having to obtain the court's leave to serve outside the court's jurisdiction. However, schedule 2 requires that an address be given simply for communications and the limitation to England and Wales is, therefore, unnecessary. Schedule 2 simply follows the existing provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 which refer to the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend also raised the problem of car parking charges at a block of flats in his constituency. That must be a matter for the leases concerned and, ultimately, it may be for the courts to decide whether such charges are payable.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I hope that my hon. Friend is not going to brush that aside as simply as that. I asked the Minister to consider that matter and not to say simply that it is up to the courts. As the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) said, if that is a loophole, it will spread very rapidly. I do not ask for a commitment at this stage of the legislation but I do ask for more than what I already know. I ask the Minister to consider it carefully.

Mr. Robinson: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction will look at that point and we shall look at it in Committee.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) suggested that landlords might set themselves up as charities to avoid the provisions of the Bill. With respect, that seems unlikely to be a problem. Even if the Charity Commissioners registered such a landlord, he would then have to prove that the block was part of his functional land since investment land of charities is not exempt from the Bill. It is wholly improbable that a landlord would be able to do that.

The role of the rent assessment committee is to settle disputes about price and other terms of sale in cases where the landlord has defaulted on the right of first refusal and under the right of compulsory acquisition in part III. Rent assessment committees, sitting as leasehold valuation tribunals, already have analogous functions under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

[Mr. Robinson]

As for matters recommended by Nugee which are not in the Bill, we have already said that we intend to bring forward amendments to deal with service charges held on trust. We cannot, I am afraid, undertake to tackle in this Bill the complex question of local authority powers on enforcement in relation to blocks of flats.

Several hon. Members have asked about the role of managing agents. We entirely share the view of the Nugee committee that management agencies, where they are employed by the landlord, must be responsible to the landlord alone. Requiring management agents to account both to the landlord and to the tenants is, in our view, a recipe for confusion. Making the agents solely accountable to the tenant would also be inappropriate. In our view, anything that obscures the fact that the responsibility for managing the block rests with the landlord will, at the end of the day, be to the disadvantage of the tenants. However, we agree that tenants should have a right to express a view on the choice and performance of managing agents. Clause 40 gives recognised residents associations certain rights to be consulted.

The hon. Members for Norwood and for Isle of Wight raised the possibility of extension leases for flats and maisonettes. The Bill is primarily concerned with the management of blocks of flats. The Nugee committee did not consider that on management grounds it could recommend a right to an extension lease for flats and maisonettes similar to that for leaseholders of houses under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967. Moreover, as the committee pointed out, a right to an extension lease could well exacerbate the problems of management by enabling people to obtain extensions to their leases which went beyond the economic life of the block.

There is undoubtedly evidence of concern about the ability of leaseholders of flats to dispose of the remainder of a lease at the price they expect, as the unexpired portion of the lease dwindles, because the person who is intending to buy the lease cannot readily find mortgage finance. That is a problem that has been highlighted by the Building Societies Association in its report "Leaseholds—time for a change". We are in touch with the Building Societies Association about the desirability of as flexible an approach as possible by building societies when considering applications for mortgages or leases which have less than about 50 years to run. However, the key to the problem is not a short-term pallative, such as a once-only right to a 50-year extension, which is what the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 provides for leaseholders of houses. That would merely postpone the day of reckoning.

To impose such a solution on ground landlords who have entered into agreements on the basis of the terms which have been settled seems to us an unwarrantable interference. We must be certain that we do nothing to undermine the confidence of ground landlords of existing developments. For the future, we must look for a more fundamental approach to the whole system of ownership of flats. I hope that the working group set up by the Lord Chancellor will pave the way for this. We need to see what it proposes and how it will relate to this problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate and the hon. Member for Battersea raised the problem of collective right to buy. Part I of the Bill gives tenants a right of first refusal to buy collectively the landlord's interest in the property where he is proposing to sell. This right applies to all qualifying tenants, whether long leasehold or renting, because it seemed to us that there were many blocks with a mixed pattern of tenure where it would be unrealistic to attempt to distinguish between long leaseholds and renting tenants to achieve our objective. However, our measures are aimed primarily at the problems which have emerged for long leaseholders in mansion blocks and elsewhere, and the further arrangements under part III for tenants to apply to court for an acquisition order if the landlord has failed in his duty apply only to blocks which are wholly or mainly long leasehold. We see no reason to go further than this and give leaseholders a right to acquire the freehold against the wishes of the freeholder irrespective of whether he has behaved badly or well. This would undermine the confidence of ground landlords, many of whom perform their duties satisfactorily.

In conclusion, in the main we have had a constructive debate and many interesting points have come out in the course of the debate. I am certain that we shall return to those points when we consider the Bill in Committee. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and myself will be considering some of the points in the course of our discussions. However, I fear that I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) that our discussions may not include his earlier Bill, the Landlord and Tenant Bill. That said, I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to,

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

LANDLORD AND TENANT (No. 2) BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read

6.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Despite the complexity of the Bill—a fact for which I apologise—its purpose is simple: to provide more effective protection from the dangers caused by fire and to ensure a higher standard of public safety at those sporting fixtures where a serious risk to public safety may exist. I shall come to the detailed provisions in a moment, but before doing so I want to give the House some idea of the general form of the Bill.

Part I of the Bill amends the Fire Precautions Act 1971. The Bill has six main purposes. They are as follows: first, to provide for exemption of certain low risk premises from the need to have fire certificates; secondly, to provide for limited charges for the issue or amendment of fire certificates; thirdly, to impose a duty on the occupiers of exempt and non-certificated premises to provide reasonable standards of fire precautions; fourthly, to impose upon the owners or occupiers of premises who have applied for certification a statutory duty to maintain a certain level of fire safety whilst their application is pending. Fifthly, the Bill enables fire authorities to issue prohibition notices in respect of premises where there is a serious risk to persons. Lastly, the Bill imposes on fire authorities a duty to inspect premises at intervals to be specified in guidance to be issued by the Secretary of State.

I shall now summarise parts II, III and IV of the Bill. They implement many of the recommendations of the Popplewell report and are designed to achieve greater safety at sports grounds and indoor sports premises. This purpose is achieved by amending the provisions of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and by the introduction of new provisions.

This part of the Bill has five major objectives, as follows. The first objective is to give to local authorities the power to prohibit or restrict the admission of spectators to grounds where there are serious risks. Secondly, stands which hold 500 or more spectators under cover at all undesignated sports grounds will require a safety certificate. Thirdly, local authorities will be required to carry out inspections of designated sports grounds and grounds containing regulated stands in accordance with guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Fourthly, all appeals under the Act, including appeals against terms and conditions contained in safety certificates, will be directed to the court and not to the Secretary of State. Lastly, for indoor sports premises, licensing legislation will be extended so that licences will generally be required for indoor sports events to which the public are invited as spectators. In summary, those are the provisions contained in the Bill.

I now want to revert to part I of the Bill, which amends the Fire Precautions Act 1971 and seeks to express in statutory form lessons which have been learnt as a result of a thorough review of the working of that Act. These proposals reflect the outcome of consultative documents published in 1985 and 1986.

Under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 fire authorities are required to certificate all premises that are put to a use designated under the Act and not otherwise exempted. Generally speaking, they include most hotels and boarding houses and those offices, shops, factories and railway premises where more than 20 people are employed to work at any one time, or more than 10 are employed on any floor other than the ground floor. In the case of offices, shops, factories and railway premises, it is known that many of these premises present little risk to persons in case of fire. To certificate them is not the most effective use of fire brigade resources.

Clause 1 of the Bill enables the Secretary of State to specify in a designation order descriptions of premises which may be exempted. That general provision is of course subject to a number of qualifications of which I mention three. It is not intended that any hotels or boarding houses which are currently subject to certification should be capable of exemption. That is because they are not regarded as being low risk. Secondly, whilse the order will describe the classes of premises which may be considered for exemption, the decision to exempt will be made by the fire authority. Lastly, exemption will not relieve the owner or occupier from a duty to maintain standards of fire safety. Clause 5 will require exempted premises to comply with a duty to make provision for adequate means of escape and fire-fighting equipment.

There are three other aspects of part I of the Bill which require rather more detailed mention.

The Bill imposes a duty on the fire authority to reinspect premises already inspected and to inspect other premises as may be directed. Under the 1971 Act there is no duty on fire authorities to reinspect premises which have been certificated, although as a matter of practice most brigades do so. The Bill requires fire authorities to inspect premises in accordance with such guidance as the Secretary of State may give. Secondly, the Bill makes provision for a fire authority to issue a prohibition notice. Under the 1971 Act the fire authority may apply to a court for an order restricting or prohibiting the use of premises where there is a serious risk to persons in the event of fire. The Bill gives the fire authority the right to serve a prohibition notice which can come into effect immediately on issue.

Thirdly, as I have said, the Bill makes provision for financial charges. It is the Government's policy that, wherever possible, the cost of local authority services should be borne by those who use them. Clause 3 enables fire authorities to charge fees to recover the costs of certification other than the cost of inspection. In substance, the fees will reflect the cost of administrative work such as obtaining further information from applicants, drawing up plans and preparing certificates. The charges to be recovered must not exceed the actual costs incurred, and I emphasise that the charges will not extend to the inspection of the premises.

Parts II, III and IV of the Bill concern the implementation of the Popplewell report. As I have already given a broad outline of the provisions, I shall concentrate on four aspects. A major feature is the power to issue prohibition notices under clauses 23 and 24. Under the 1975 Act, the local authority must apply to a court for an order to restrict or prohibit the admission of spectators to a ground where there is a serious risk to spectators. The Bill provides that the local authority itself may serve a notice on the ground management where there is a serious

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

risk to spectators. The notice may apply to the whole ground or to part of the ground. The Bill provides for a right of appeal to the courts.

The second aspect to which I wish to make specific reference is the duty of inspection provided by clauses 25 and 34. The Bill places a duty on the authority to arrange for periodic follow-up inspections of designated sports grounds and grounds which contain regulated stands. Most local authorities already carry out such inspections at designated grounds and the Popplewell report recommended that the practice should be made mandatory. The Government have accepted an amendment passed in another place requiring inspections of designated grounds to be made annually. Otherwise, the frequency and extent of the inspections will be as directed by the Secretary of State.

I should like to mention those provisions in the Bill which provide for safety certificates for regulated stands. Perhaps the major innovation in this part of the Bill is that a permanent stand which provides covered accommodation for 500 or more spectators at an undesignated sports ground will require a safety certificate. Such a stand will be referred to as a regulated stand. The provisions of part III of the Bill apply to all undesignated sports grounds, regardless of the sport involved. The certification of regulated stands will be similar to that for designated sports grounds under the 1975 Act and may contain terms and conditions relating to such matters as exit routes, fire precautions and spectator capacity. As a consequence of these measures, and provided that the stands are used properly, the public may be confident that reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that they are accommodated in safety.

Lastly, I wish to deal with the provisions relating to safety at indoor sports premises. Part IV of the Bill extends the system of public entertainment licensing to cover spectator sports activities conducted indoors. Subject to minor qualifications, the result will be that premises used for entertainments consisting of any sporting event to which the public are invited as spectators will require a licence. This will allow the licensing authority to consider all aspects of safety, including fire precautions and structural matters.

Since the Bradford fire, we have all become more conscious of the danger that may arise when large crowds congregate at sports events. The main purpose of the Bill is to reduce that risk and to take practical measures to ensure greater safety for spectators at sporting fixtures. The other purpose of the Bill is to incorporate in statutory form the conclusions that have emerged from a comprehensive review of the 1971 Act.

I am pleased to say that the Bill received all-party support in another place. I commend it to this House and hope that it will receive a Second Reading.

6.45 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I, too, welcome the Bill. It represents a worthwhile advance in fire safety and the Opposition will ensure that there are no unnecessary delays in getting it through the House provided that we can subject it to proper scrutiny. We certainly want the Bill to become law. I do not think that it is immodest to point out that the important improvements made in another place were largely at the instigation of Labour Members, and we shall seek to improve the Bill still further in Committee.

An important aspect of the background to this legislation was the tragic fire at Bradford City football ground which led to understandable concern about the safety of sports grounds. The Bradford fire gave rise to the Popplewell inquiry and I welcome the findings of that inquiry, many of which are incorporated in the Bill.

With regard to fire safety generally, the latest available statistics show that in 1984 there were just under 450,000 fires in the United Kingdom, of which just over 100,000 were in occupied buildings; there were 887 fatal casualties, and more than 11,000 non-fatal casualties, and many thousands of people were rescued by fire brigades.

I wish to consider in a little more detail the more than 100,000 fires which occurred in occupied buildings as they are relevant to some of the provisions of the Bill. Most of those fires—nearly 59,000—occurred in dwellings, but there were about 7,500 in private garages and sheds and about 8,000 in industrial premises other than construction industry or agricultural premises. There were also about 1,700 fires in hotels, hostels and boarding houses and about 1,500 in places of public entertainment. Those categories do not exactly match those covered by the Bill, but they are relevant to them, as I shall make clear later.

First, however, I wish to deal with the question of charges. I believe that this is the first time that any charge has been contemplated in this country for any matter to do with fire safety and I believe that it is a retrograde step. I fully appreciate that the charges provided for in the Bill relate to administrative matters and not to the cost of inspecting premises. Ministers have assured us in another place and in this House today that the charges will be kept as low as possible, but to me it is a matter of principle that there should be no charge for any aspect of fire safety because such a charge may act as a deterrent to people in ensuring that premises are properly inspected and certificated. If a charge attaches to any element in that work, the deterrent effect may lead to lower standards of fire safety. That represents the thin end of the wedge.

Once we have embarked upon the path of charging people or firms for matters to do with fire safety, there is no end to it and step by step the Government could say, "Let us recoup more of the cost of the fire services by increasing the charges." I urge the Minister to think again. In Committee we shall seriously challenge that principle. No adequate justification for it has been put forward so far, whether in this House or in the other place. I should be surprised if the Minister could produce in Committee any argument to defend that proposal.

My second concern relates to an aspect of clause 1 which, I believe, was the subject of considerable argument in another place. It concerns the exemption from the requirement for a fire certificate. I notice that instead of making mandatory some aspects of inspections and the collection of information, those matters are optional. When making a decision on whether to grant an exemption, a fire authority

"may require the applicant or, as the case may be, the occupier of the premises to give such information as"

the fire authority requires

"about the premises and any matter connected with them; and

(b) cause to be carried out an inspection of the relevant building."

It is provided that

"the fire authority may make that decision without requiring any such information to be given or causing any such inspection to be carried out."

I am not satisfied that there is a sound basis for making that entirely discretionary. It would be better if people were obliged to provide that information and if there were an obligatory inspection of the relevant building.

I appreciate that the thrust of the Government's argument is that we should use fire service resources to the best advantage, and that there is a fear that the fire services may be obliged to spend too much of their time on small buildings or on buildings which are identical to other types of buildings and which, therefore, do not all need to be inspected. However, there is a simple answer to that. If the buildings are all of a type, and if the Minister says that the fire authority need not inspect all the buildings because of that, it follows that the inspection would be quick and need not take up too much of the fire authority's resources. The same would apply if the premises were small.

I have had discussions with and representations from the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. Bluntly, it is concerned about safety standards in what would normally be called sweat shops, and in small premises relating to the clothing industry. Many hon. Members will know that there was a tragic fire in one of those premises in the Mile End road in October 1983 in which five women died. That gave rise to a further wave of concern about safety standards, especially fire safety standards, in such premises.

The Minister said that small premises were not covered and gave some figures. He talked about factories and other types of premises being covered in which there are more than 20 people, or more than 10 elsewhere than on the ground floor. Therefore, smaller premises would not be covered. Although there may be many types of small premises in which fire risks are slight, I am concerned that in the clothing trade all the evidence suggests that the fire risks are not small. It is not right that those buildings should be exempt from general provisions that apply to other premises.

Another type of premises is the one that is normally called "houses in multiple occupation". Having studied the *Hansard* of the other place, I am aware that when this matter was raised there the Minister in charge of the Bill stated that the inspection of houses in multiple occupation came under housing legislation and was the responsibility of local authorities. However, we know that local authorities do not adequately inspect houses in multiple occupation, and that a person living in such a dwelling has nine times the chance of suffering death through fire than a person living in any other type of residential dwelling. We also know that, of the 350,000 or so houses in multiple occupation, about 127,000 do not have an effective means of escape from fire. The Minister may argue that that is more properly a matter for housing legislation, but I would say no.

This is a worthwhile Bill dealing with fire safety, and I cannot for the life of me see why it should not also cover matters relating to the safety from fire in houses of multiple occupation. The Minister will be aware that there has been an enormous campaign for many years to try to improve the safety standards in such residential accommodation. It would be sensible to say that now that legislation is before us, which, in the main is not controversial but is widely accepted on both sides of the House, we want it to go further and to apply to houses in multiple occupation.

I turn to the second area covered by the Bill, safety at places of sport. I recently visited Chelsea football club. I appreciate that that club is already covered by other measures and that, therefore, its premises would not be changed by this legislation. Nevertheless, I went to look at the safety measures there, at the police control of the crowds and at the other measures. I was impressed by the safety measures that I saw. I was also impressed by the way in which the police controlled the crowds. On that occasion Chelsea was playing Manchester United and a big crowd was expected. I was impressed at the way in which, through television or video screens, the police monitored the crowd within the ground and in the adjoining streets. It was an impressive operation and I began better to understand the enormous efforts that are made to try to ensure the safety of crowds at football clubs.

Prior to this Bill similar provisions have not been quite so readily applicable to other types of sports grounds. Therefore, I welcome this measure. I am not referring now to police control and am not suggesting that the Bill should cover that. However, it contains other measures relating to safety and I welcome those. I notice, for example, that in grounds for 10,000 or more spectators —I believe that that covers 163 grounds in this country —there will be further provisions for safety as described in the Bill.

I am not completely certain about one measure. According to the Popplewell recommendations, there are 300 stadiums which house 500 or more people. They will be covered by the scope of the Bill. I wonder whether 500 is too large a cut-off point. There must be quite a number of sports stadiums and sports grounds which accommodate fewer than 500 people but in which safety measures are still important. If, for example, 300 or 400 people were in a stadium, there might be a significant risk if there were not adequate fire safety measures. Although I appreciate that one cannot cover such matters all in one go because that would put too big a burden on the fire services, I should have thought it worthwhile to consider lowering the cut-off point from 500 people.

Finally, one point which concerns me was not mentioned in the other place, has not yet been mentioned here, and, so far as I can tell, is not referred to in the Bill. It relates to emergency lighting in sports grounds. Increasingly sports grounds have floodlighting so that spectators may attend events in the evening. That seems worthwhile and sensible. However, there are serious risks even in a relatively small ground if the main lighting fails and there is inadequate emergency lighting. I wonder whether the Minister would comment on that. If there is no provision in other legislation, and as far as I know there is none, there are serious dangers if the main lighting fails and there is no emergency lighting. There would be chaos at a sports ground if several thousand people were suddenly pitched into utter darkness through the failure of the floodlighting and other lighting.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that sports grounds should have three circuits? Floodlighting is on a different circuit from normal lighting, so is he suggesting that there should be a third circuit? That seems extravagant.

Mr. Dubs: Floodlighting mainly covers the pitch. I am talking about the lighting that enables spectators to move in and out of the ground and the stands. I was not aware that floodlighting lit the stands. If the lighting in the stands fails, the floodlighting would not enable spectators to see their way in and out of the ground.

This is a welcome measure. We should like to take it a little further in Committee and to ensure that it reaches the statute book. It has the support of many organisations, including the Fire Brigades Union and the fire service, both of which are keen that it should reach the statute book quickly. I should be reluctant to see it die halfway through because of a general election. *[Interruption.]* I shall be happy to see a general election called, but I should like the Bill to be passed first. We shall do our best to ensure that the Bill is given proper scrutiny and a quick passage in Committee. It will add significantly to safety at places of work and sports grounds.

7.2 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): It is a pleasure to take part in a debate in which there will obviously be all-party accord. I certainly concur with the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) that we should like the Bill to pass through the House as quickly as possible, albeit with certain alterations in Committee. I agree that some aspects have been omitted.

The Bill has come about because of various tragic events, including the fire at Bradford, the problems at the Heysel stadium, and the preceding crowd control problems at Birmingham and Luton Town football clubs. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) in his usual place behind the Front Bench because he will know that I was at Luton on that sad March evening. That experience made me give evidence to the Popplewell committee and perhaps spurred us all into action.

We must remember that this excellent Bill covers all sports, and not merely soccer stadiums. As the hon. Gentleman said, soccer stadiums must already comply with legislative requirements. It is a little disappointing to see the sparse attendance on both Benches, especially considering the number of stadiums that will be affected, and it would have been nice to see some representatives from sports other than soccer because this far-reaching Bill will affect more clubs than hon. Members perhaps at present imagine. I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) present.

The proposals of the hon. Member for Battersea to reduce the numbers in the stands and to erect other stands may result in village stadiums which do not have as many barriers and fences as major stadiums. I hope that this Bill will give us an opportunity to make grounds more open. I shall restrict my remarks to parts II and III, particularly to the provisions that deal with crowd control.

Hon. Members do not need to be reminded that football hooliganism has played a large part in forming and necessitating the Bill. It is not a modern problem and it is not restricted to the United Kingdom, although the media sometimes give that impression. Many of us who have experienced hooliganism understand the problems of crowd control, particularly in and around football grounds. The Bill addresses football hooliganism and crowd control. We must remember that many problems and fatalities in stadiums have occurred, not necessarily because of bad behaviour, but because many people are crammed into a small area. Their ability to leave the ground has been restricted in various ways, as was tragically seen at Bradford, and the Bill must address that.

Because of football hooliganism and the troubles that it has brought to various clubs we have almost inevitably begun to pen fans in, which has caused additional problems of crowd control. We have erected fences not so much around pitches as around stands to prevent spectators from running on to the pitch and from throwing missiles on to it. We have had to erect safety barriers to control crowds and prevent them crushing people and, perhaps more sadly, to segregate opposing fans from each other.

The enormous amount of work done in that area since the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 has been funded largely by the Football Trust. Last week a tribute was paid in the House to its work and I endorse that this evening. Where large numbers of people congregate, particularly in football stadiums, we tend to put them into cages and pens. Some would say that, because of the way they behave, that is the only place for them. But that has resulted in additional problems of getting them out.

I vividly remember the sad night in March at the Luton-Millwall game. Part of the problem was that the overcapacity crowd had to spill on to the pitch; the stadium was not big enough to hold them. That is when our problems of hooliganism got worse. I am not ashamed to promote the lessons we learned from the experience. We in Luton have taken measures, some of which were recommended by Popplewell, to counteract that. After the Luton-Milwall game the Football League proposed that the club should be fined £5,000 and should erect a fence all the way around the ground to prevent spectators from running on to the pitch. Two months later we had the tragedy at the Bradford stadium and immediately that restriction was withdrawn. The tragedy is that the Football League in its wisdom thought it fit to keep the crowd off the pitch in that way.

Popplewell addressed the problem and perhaps it is a pity that nothing in the Bill deals with access to the pitch. Recommendation 35 on page 81 states:

> "The Group further recommends that the importance of allowing full access to the pitch where this is likely to be used as a place of safety in emergency should be made plain."

On that evening that access was extremely important. Indeed, if the fence had been erected, a fire would have resulted in tragedy. It was pleasing to note that the Football League immediately withdrew its recommendation. We in football should remove fences, barriers and segregated areas rather than put them up if we are to introduce the family atmosphere that we enjoy at Luton. Recommendation 57 on page 83 of the report states:

> "In particular, at the present time segregation should not be advocated for sports other than soccer."

In other words, Mr. Justice Popplewell was against segregation. The Bill might have addressed that problem. The experience in Luton since we banned away fans has been quite remarkable. The atmosphere on the terraces is friendly. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South will support me because he has, perhaps, had more experience with the town than I have. Luton is a pleasant place. We have tried to bring back the family atmosphere, and that is difficult to engender if opposing fans are determined to wreck not only the ground but the town. We at Luton have certainly found one of the answers to segregation. One of the other answers that Mr. Justice

Popplewell put forward—it is not in the Bill but might be introduced in Committee—is membership. I refer the House to page 46, paragraph 4.128 of the Popplewell report, which states:

"I recommend that consideration should continue to be given to some form of membership scheme for Football League clubs in England and Wales."

If we had a full membership scheme, there would be no need for fences, barriers or any type of restrictions at any of our grounds. That is certainly the experience that we have had at Luton. I am amazed that those who oppose all-membership schemes are happy to accept all-ticket matches for big games but do not want all-ticket matches for the rest of the season.

This is a good Bill and one that is needed. It could be improved in Committee by amendments and new clauses that will open sports grounds further. That is what we should do. The Bill, perhaps, slightly misses its purpose, but nonetheless it will have the support of all hon. Members. It is a worthwhile measure which certainly deserves support both inside and outside the House.

7.12 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I also welcome the Bill. On Second Reading, I wish it well, though there will be points that we shall wish to put forward in Committee.

When children from my constituency come to the House of Commons, they tend to say, after a tour and after a talk, "Do we not have too much legislation?" Whereas on the whole one tends to consider that they are right, a Bill such as this is necessary because of the events that preceded it. This Bill will improve standards, and one only regrets the fact that it must follow the tragic events of 11 May 1985 at Valley Parade in Bradford.

We welcome the fact that the recommendations of the Popplewell committee have been taken into account—which is greatly to the credit both of the Government and of Mr. Justice Popplewell, whose wise words have been heeded, including the words about annual inspections, which are applauded by both sides of the House.

Clause 22 now allows local authorities to issue a notice on those responsible for administering a ground, restricting or prohibiting the admission of spectators until a risk is reduced. Before the introduction of clause 22, local authorities had to apply to a magistrates' court for an order to restrict entry. Does that mean that local authorities can take action without reference to a fire authority? I shall be happy to have an answer now, but I am content to wait until the Minister has examined the matter.

In another place, Lord Taylor of Gryfe mentioned the Consumers Association and its criticism of the Bill for not adequately addressing the issue of informing the public about hazards.

The House will know that I have spent much of my time over the years in this place pursuing issues connected with access to and freedom of information. In Committee, I shall seek to table an amendment in which the Consumers Association's philosophy is enshrined, whereby there will be a duty on the part of sports facilities to inform the public of the fire regulations and the situation in respect of facilitating exist in case of disaster.

Some may ask, "What is the point of this sort of amendment? Nobody reads the small print; notices get stuck on walls but nobody reads them." That may be right for 96 out of 100 people, but the other four are those on whom the public depend. They tend to be local journalists, consumer associations or simply spectators who are more concerned with safety than are others. An amendment such as that, to which I hope the Government will consent, would have substantial appeal.

I hope that the Minister will keep his eye most specifically on the charges that are to be made, one accepts not for the inspection, but for administration. I am concerned that there will be no equality in the charges and that different parts of the country will impose different fees. That will not necessarily have anything to do with the identity of those who seek a fire certificate. The point made by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) about extending the Bill, which is something that, in opposition, the Government sought to do to every Bill that came before the House, is realistically argued in respect of houses in multiple occupation. More and more local authorities are forced by the shortage in council houses to put people into such accommodation; they deserve sympathy and must have the same safety regulations as those that apply to people who are more conveniently housed. I support the Bill and am grateful to the Government for bringing it in.

7.17 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): I shall long remember the atmosphere at Valley Parade on the December day when the new ground was opened. There was a capacity crowd with a number of people who, in many respects, had every right to be the most nervous about returning to a packed football stand, and yet at the same time were the most eager to go back to the ground that had experienced such a tragic event. They did so because they had faith that lessons had been learnt from the tragedy and that the club, on the advice of the architect and of Mr. Justice Popplewell, had taken all reasonable steps to ensure that they should feel safe and secure and that their confidence should be restored. Fencing had certainly been installed on one stand, yet it did not seem to deter those who might have imagined only too vividly how much more tragic it would have been if fencing had been installed on the stand that burnt down. They returned because they had confidence. The Bill gives that same confidence to many millions of people who regularly attend sporting events.

Unfortunately, it seems that all too often a disaster of that magnitude must occur before lessons are learnt and actions are taken. Despite the Bill and any other measures that the House may pass, all possible events can never be foreseen. Unfortunately, disasters will always happen.

The public have a right to expect the Government and Parliament to learn from disasters and to take appropriate action. We would be highly irresponsible if we failed in that duty. As far as possible, people expect us to minimise the danger of that sort of event recurring. The public do not expect measures or us to be perfect; they accept that there will always be the unforeseen. However, they will accept that only if the Government and Parliament have taken all possible steps to ensure their safety, whether on cross-Channel ferries or in sporting stadiums.

Part of the reason for this debate is the work of Mr. Justice Popplewell. We all pay tribute to him for the work that he put into his report. It is fitting that he was invited to Valley Parade to reopen the new ground, because his

[Mr. Geoff Lawler]

efforts and interest went beyond the call of duty and earned him great respect in the city of Bradford. I know that he has earned great respect in this House.

In the aftermath of a tragedy, one way of measuring how effective a piece of legislation will be is to determine whether the disaster would have happened if the legislation had been on the statute book at the time. I am convinced that if this legislation had been in place the tragedy of May 1985 would not have taken place. The local authority would have inspected the ground annually and the great fire risk of the accumulated rubbish and lack of sufficient egress from the ground would have been discovered. Instead of hesitating about taking the club to court, as the local authority had to do under previous legislation, it would have been able to close the ground straightaway and prevent access by spectators. In any case, after August 1985 the ground would have been designated, as were the grounds of all third and fourth division clubs.

Like the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), I welcome the amendment in the other place which requires annual inspections. I understand that that will not be too much of a burden for the fire service and it will give spectators extra peace of mind. I welcome the fact that the Government have incorporated that amendment in the Bill.

In matters like this, a balance must always be struck between what is a practicable and reasonable burden and what is necessary to ensure people's safety. This Bill comes down on the right side of that balance. There are one or two points of concern which I hope will be looked at in Committee. One of them has been mentioned and it is the figure of 500 for the number of people that a stand may accommodate before it requires a safety certificate.

There must always be an arbitrarily chosen figure, but one can picture the horror if a stand accommodating 450 people, and which, therefore, is not required to have a safety certificate, collapsed or burnt down in the same tragic way as the stand at Valley Parade did. I hope that that does not have to happen before the Government consider whether the figure of 500 is right. I hope that the Committee will look long and hard at whether 500 is the right level at which to pitch the threshold.

The alternatives are stronger legislation or self-compliance. In terms of self-compliance, no one doubts that in most cases management is highly responsible. Equally, no one doubts that management is only human and can be fallible and that, despite the best intentions, the management of a stand that accommodates fewer than 500 people could find itself with a structure that did not meet the requirements necessary for a safety certificate. I hope that we will consider putting in a proviso to enable the Secretary of State to alter the figure by order or in the legislation itself. Of course, there is the ultimate sanction that a ground can be closed if it is considered unsafe. However, an extra guarantee of safety would be welcome.

There is no provision in the Bill to govern the materials used in the construction of stands. Part of the problem at Bradford was that the timber and the tar roof enabled the fire to spread very rapidly. Even though timber providers and roofing contractors maintain that there is sufficient egress, it is still a source of worry if combustible materials are used in the construction of a stand.

In the building regulations issued in November 1985 I was most disturbed to discover that it is still possible for a stand to be built of exactly the same materials as those which were used in the construction of the Bradford City stand. I hope that the matter will be tackled in the legislation or that the Department of the Environment will look again at the building regulations and alter the guidance to ensure that stands similar to the one that burnt down at Bradford City can never again be built to accommodate large numbers of spectators.

One further matter of concern that Mr. Justice Popplewell mentioned in his report is guidance about fire and safety standards generally for temporary stands and marquees. As we approach the summer, increasingly we see such structures springing up on village greens and in fields. They are a source of worry. I hope that that factor will be taken into account.

In the last few years there has been little encouragement to people to return to football matches. On top of the prevalent violence at football grounds, the Bradford City football disaster was an extra deterrent to people to go to places where there is a large number of spectators, and especially to football matches. Unfortunately, we can never legislate to remove hooliganism, although one hopes that the steps currently being taken to reduce violence at our football grounds will be effective.

The Bill goes a long way towards helping to reduce the chances of our football grounds continuing to be unsafe. Consequently, I hope that one of the effects of the Bill will be to make the elderly and the young feel safe and secure enough to attend football matches, knowing that they will be safe from disaster, even if not from violence. This Bill is the last chapter in the aftermath of the Bradford City tragedy. I hope that we will never require another such Bill. This Bill minimises the chance of a similar occurrence, and that is why I wish it well.

7.27 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): The Bill is in five parts, but it seems when reading through it that it is in 55 parts. Some of the clauses are clumsy in parts and wrong in others. I cannot believe that the Bill is the Minister's property. He must have inherited it, because I am sure that his clarity of mind has not been brought to bear in this otherwise worthwhile Bill. I join those hon. Members who welcome it.

I shall confine my remarks to the safety at sports grounds section covered by the Popplewell inquiry. I add my congratulations to Mr. Justice Popplewell for all that he has done in this area. As we know, he highlighted the potential dangers at our sports grounds and made a number of important recommendations, many of which the Bill has taken on board. Many of the timely interventions in the other place also helped the Bill and tidied it up. Without those interventions, it would not be such a good Bill.

I wonder why the Government have not consulted some of the obvious people before introducing the Bill. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) spoke about the Football Trust. It has already helped 54 non-league clubs. Why was the trust not approached before the Bill was drafted? I shall develop that point later. Without active help from the trust, many clubs would go to the wall.

What about sports other than football which do not have the Football Trust to which to turn? Last week, we had an interesting debate on a range of sporting matters. It was good to hear contributions about sporting organisations. My hon. Friend the Member for

Gateshead, East (Mr. Conlan) referred to greyhound racing. What do race courses, greyhound racing and rugby league and rugby union clubs do without a Football Trust to come to their aid? Have the Government consulted them?

The Government always seem to rush into legislation on sports matters. Of course, there was an urgent need for this legislation and something had to be done in the short term, but it was important to get the legislation right. There does not seem to be adequate consultation by the Government on sporting matters, as shown in this case.

I do not want to be churlish. I want to be more constructive than hon. Members may think I have been so far, but those comments had to be made. I welcome the tightening of the regulations on spectator accommodation and support the idea of annual inspections. Only through constant and consistent monitoring can we stop tragedies of the Bradford type recurring.

There are other clauses, specially clauses 26 and 31, where the Government could have got it wrong. Safety certificates will need to be issued for any stand with a capacity of 500 or more spectators. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) and the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) believe that that figure is too high, but I am not sure that it is. To reduce immediately the level from 10,000 for a ground to 500 for a stand is an enormous leap for local authorities and fire authorities to cope with. I believe that there will be a constructive debate on the figure in Committee to ascertain whether it should be amended. I do not say that the present figure is right, but I do not know whether it has been considered adequately.

The Bill's implication is that clubs with stands that are dangerous will, rightly, be prevented from using them until they are improved and made safe. But from where will the money come? That question has not been addressed so far. The Government are imposing strict conditions on small clubs, but giving them no help with improvements. No doubt, the costs will be shuffled on to the Football Trust and the Football Ground Improvement Trust. Both bodies do good work for the game, but the cost implications of the Bill, which are as yet unknown, will all fall on to the Football Ground Improvement Trust, which may not be able to afford them. By reducing the designated level to 500 overnight—I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea that it should be reduced even further—the cost will be pushed on to the smallest clubs.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Luton, North will be interested in a letter which I received last week from a representative of the Vauxhall-Opel league which said:

"I am very concerned at the implications of this Bill for clubs outside the Today league particularly as this league has been conducting a long campaign to improve the gradings at our club grounds."

Were that league and other leagues consulted before the Bill was introduced? On top of this, the recent Football Association ruling which has banned plastic pitches for those clubs entering the FA cup competition will mean that small clubs will not invest in pitches that can mean a financial saving for them. I know that this point is close to the heart of the hon. Member for Luton, North. My own Hyde United, following much prompting from me and assistance from the Football Association and Football Trust, aquired an artificial pitch, but because of the ruling will no longer be able to use it.

Mr. John Carlisle: While the hon. Gentleman is talking about artificial surfaces, would he like to reinforce the point that there was a rumour that artificial surfaces might be inflammable and that, if there were a disaster or tragedy such as that which occurred at Bradford, a fire could spread on to the pitch? Would the hon. Gentleman like to confirm that tests so far have shown that those surfaces would in no way constitute a greater danger than grass?

Mr. Pendry: I am happy to give a plug for the hon. Gentleman, so long as it does not give him too many votes. I am sure that what he says makes sense. It is nonsense that the clubs in the lower levels of the league, which are trying to bring about a community spirit and use their facilities all week, should be penalised as they have been.

The problems of finance continue with clause 31. Fees will be charged for issuing safety certificates, but their level is unknown. It is not clear whether the costs will be uniform across the country. Perhaps the Minister will clear up that point. Clubs already face high rates bills and will have to fund improvements. The recent test case by Sheffield United confirms that clubs must continue to pay for policing at grounds. That cost is on top of all the other burdens which they face. Furthermore, the Bill estimates that £1 million may be raised from these charges for its fire safety aspects, but no estimate is given for the sports grounds aspects. Why not?

Local authorities should be inspecting grounds. It is thought that 4,000 man days will be needed for that job to be done properly. Some of the local authorities have already been rate-capped by the Government and will need additional income to afford those inspections. Our smallest sports clubs should not be forced to pay. I hope that there will be a great deal of rethinking of this aspect in Committee.

The Bill's overall aim is admirable. It is time that we took safety at our sports grounds seriously. I wonder whether the legislation will make our football grounds safer or will just close them. I welcome the broad thrust of the Bill. I hope that the Minister will undertake to be his usual flexible self in Committee and will listen to the reasoned arguments for amending and improving the Bill.

7.37 pm

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I am happy to join the general welcome given to the Bill. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on introducing it. There is no doubt that the dangers of fire are real where the public come together.

I should like to draw to the attention of the House one specific aspect where more preventive work can be done —emergency lighting. If the lights go out in any place— whether at a sports ground, at work or in a hotel, boarding house, factory or shop — and no other lighting is available, there is likely to be panic when people do not know their way to the exits. The tragedy at Bradford demonstrated the panic that can occur where there is no lighting problem. But in the recent Townsend Thoresen disaster the emergency lighting failed because it was on a central circuit rather than battery-power emergency lighting units. The case for emergency lighting is very strong.

This matter was raised in the other place by Lord Graham of Edmonton, who was my predecessor in the constituency of Enfield, Edmonton. That demonstrates that this is not a party political matter but is of all-party

[Dr. Ian Twinn]

concern. I am concerned about it as a Member representing a constituency on the borders of Spurs and as a patron of Enfield Town football club — another great football institution.

In Edmonton, we produce lighting. I am concerned about the sort of provision that the lighting industry can give a place of sport, or other places, but which is not being taken up at the moment. There is no statutory obligation to provide emergency lighting in many places in which the public congregate. The legislation is couched in terms of "should" rather than "shall". That has resulted in a lack of uniformity of provision. Fire prevention officers visit to check whether to give a certificate, and they may themselves be uncertain whether the owners of the premises in question should be compelled to put in emergency lighting. There is a real danger that, in some parts of the country, the law may be interpreted in such a way as not to force football clubs or offices to put in emergency lighting. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider that point.

As regards the inspection of premises to check on the provision of emergency lighting and perhaps other features, there is no uniformity among inspectors and no requirement to have regular inspections. I welcome the Government's acceptance of the amendment from the other place that requires annual inspections of places of sport, but that does not apply to the inspection of other places.

I urge my hon. Friend to consider whether places that already have emergency lighting — those without it should have it—should be required to demonstrate that it works properly.

At present, emergency lighting is usually supplied with a three-year warranty, so we may assume that there are three years of good life in an installation. After that, there is no way of enforcing an inspection. Perhaps it would be a good idea if the British standard for the installation were enforced and we had a regular three-yearly inspection that made it incumbent on the owner of the property to demonstrate to the fire brigade that the system worked. That would be a great help in preventing the types of tragedy that have taken place elsewhere.

I do not wish to detain the House further, but I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would give the matter of emergency lighting his consideration in Committee.

7.43 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the Minister have the leave of the House to speak again?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Hogg: I wish to begin by thanking hon. Members on both sides of the House for the warm welcome that they have given to the Bill. That augurs well for a speedy passage; none the less, the Bill will go into Committee where hon. Members will subject it to the scrutiny that I would expect from them.

I shall begin by dealing with the points that were so helpfully raised by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). He and the hon. Members for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) were concerned with the issue of charges, which the hon. Member for Battersea opposes on principle. I am afraid that he must accept that we have a difference of opinion about that: the Government think it right that when benefit falls to business proprietors, they should make a contribution to the costs. I emphasise that the costs will be modest. One brigade has estimated that the cost for a factory of 20,000 sq ft would be £30, for an office block, £60, and for a hotel with 30 bedrooms, £100. That shows how modest the charges are.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East raised the subject of equality, as did the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde. It is perfectly true that the Home Office will not set the level of fees. That is a matter for the fire authority, but the Home Office will be giving guidance. As both hon. Members will know, the fire inspectorate is able to nudge and guide to obtain uniformity of approach. It is the Government's intention to achieve such uniformity of approach to charging. That is not to say that the fees will be exactly the same, but it does mean that we hope that there will not be any great variation.

On clause 1, the hon. Member for Battersea suggested that the obligation on the fire authority should be mandatory—in other words, it should require the owner to furnish information, and should inspect the premises. As the hon. Member rightly said, the applicant is under a duty to furnish information and permit inspection if required, but there is no reverse obligation on the fire authority. The reason for giving the discretion to the fire authority is that it is often already aware of the state of the premises; for example, it may have been involved in the planning stage, and it is therefore thought right that the authority should have the discretion. If that still worries the hon. Member for Battersea, we can discuss it again in Committee.

The hon. Gentleman went on to comment on the clothing trade. He suggested that small premises below the present threshold should be subject to the certification process. In clauses 4 to 6 the Bill introduces a new general duty, to be observed by non-certificated premises, to provide reasonable means of escape, and fire equipment. As the hon. Gentleman knows, those clauses enable the fire authority to impose an improvement notice on such businesses, and if they fail to comply with the terms of such a notice they may well be committing an offence. Moreover, there is the general last resort power of the prohibition notice. In any event, the law is being strengthened by the procedure. That can also be discussed in Committee if the hon. Gentleman thinks that we have not gone into the matter far enough.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the issue of houses in multiple occupation. Local authorities have the power, under the Housing Act 1985, to require satisfactory means of escape from fire, and they must consult the fire authorities. As another instrument of last resort, the fire authorities have power under clause 9 to impose a prohibition notice on houses in multiple occupation.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the matter of regulated stands and suggested that a threshold of 500 was too high. He was supported in that by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler). I do not want to die in the last ditch on that matter. We are adopting the figure that was recommended in the Popplewell report. Hon. Members have suggested — or implied — that we could take a power by secondary legislation to lower the

threshold. Again, that is a matter for discussion in Committee. I see no objection to it in principle, but I prefer not to give a commitment now.

The subject of lighting was raised by the hon. Member for Battersea and by my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn). For sports grounds, the lighting requirement can be made in safety certificates that deal with a designated ground, and could also apply in the terms and conditions of the certificate that is issued in respect of a regulated stand. The provision of adequate emergency lighting is one of the requirements that are set out in the Home Office publication, "Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds". I appreciate that my hon. Friend's remarks go further than sports grounds, in that he was discussing lighting in non-sporting areas, in respect of, for example, certificated or exempt premises. As my hon. Friend knows, the Bill contains a right of reinspection. I can see no reason why reinspection should not extend to emergency lighting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) mentioned fencing and rightly said that in certain circumstances the pitch could be the emergency escape route. That point is made in the Government's publication and I would expect an appropriate requirement to appear in the terms and conditions annexed to certificates issued for designated grounds.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) has been present throughout the debate and is very interested in safety at sports grounds. He has played a prominent part in getting the Bill through and I am grateful to him for his assistance. He is a Parliamentary Private Secretary and, therefore, is precluded from speaking in the debate, but he has been here throughout and I am extremely grateful for his advice.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East asked about clause 22. The answer to his question is that a prohibition notice is issued by the local authority rather than the fire authority, because a notice can extend beyond fire risks to other sorts of risk. However, a copy of the notice will have to be sent to the fire and police authorities which will be kept aware of what the local authority has in mind. There is a right of appeal.

I have referred to the valuable comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North. I am grateful for his support. He says that the Bill will go a long way to prevent a repetition of the Bradford disaster and no one speaks with greater authority on such matters than my hon. Friend, whose interest is well known.

My hon. Friend asked about combustible materials used in regulated stands. The building regulations prescribe what sort of material should be used, but if existing or new buildings contain combustible materials, the terms and conditions attached to the safety certificate will have to make special provision for that fact. In that way, the Bill carries the matter further forward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North also made the sensible comment that temporary stands are sometimes erected at sports grounds. That issue is not covered by the Bill, but it includes a power to impose a prohibition notice in a limited number of cases.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde asked who was consulted. The answer is that we consulted a number of people, including the Football Trust and the Rugby Football Union. The hon. Gentleman made a number of remarks about funding and I understand that his general position is that, although he welcomes the thrust of the Bill he feels that it is likely to impose substantial financial burdens. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I am fairly robust in saying that we have to decide where our primary duty rests. I suggest that the primary duty of the House is to ensure public safety and I do not think that it is asking too much of the sporting community for it to make a substantial financial commitment to that objective, which the hon. Gentleman and I share.

I have endeavoured to answer the important points raised by hon. Members. I am extremely grateful for the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House and I hope that they will all serve on the Standing Committee. *[Interruption.]* I knew that that would be a popular suggestion. I hope that the Bill will pass speedily through Committee and become law.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Pilotage Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

7.54 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The objective of the Bill is to reform the organisation of marine pilotage, to simplify its administration by doing away with much of the complex legislation that regulates it at present, and to make it possible for changes to be made in pilotage services to meet modern requirements and to reflect changes in the patterns of shipping and trade.

The Bill does not reflect on the skill and professionalism of the pilots and others involved in the pilotage services. However, almost everyone concerned with pilotage has acknowledged for at least the past 15 years that the way in which pilotage is organised needs to be reformed. The increasingly competitive environment in which our ports and shipping industries are now placed means that we can no longer readily accept the costs of a service which is not as efficiently organised as it should be.

Despite a few recent legislative changes consolidated into the Pilotage Act 1983, the basic structure of the pilotage organisation remains as laid down in the Pilotage Act 1913. The provisions that were added in the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 to provide a means of reforming the organisation of pilotage proved to be unworkable in practice once the consensus that had existed in the 1970s about the reforms that were necessary had broken down.

At present, responsibility for pilotage services rests with the authorities for 93 pilotage districts. Those authorities, or the committees through which they operate, consist chiefly of representatives of the main parties with interests in pilotage, particularly the pilots, shipowners and port authorities. That structure has made it difficult to achieve agreement on the changes that need to be made in many cases. Perhaps understandably, each party has concentrated on pursuing its own interests, with the result that the best has often been the enemy of the good.

Even when pilotage authorities have managed to agree on sensible measures of reform they have generally been frustrated because under existing legislation all the main interested parties can object to the draft byelaws and orders needed to implement the reform. Such objections made to the Pilotage Commission and the Secretary of State often go beyond purely local interests. The fear that precedents may be set for other areas has been a major factor in inhibiting agreement on reforms.

I appreciate, of course, the efforts that have been made to achieve reform by means of that unsatisfactory system and I recognise the frustration that many must feel that so much work, discussion and negotiation has been put into reforming pilotage with so little positive result. All that effort has demonstrated that it is essential that someone should be in a position to take clear decisions and to implement them.

The result of the present impasse is that the organisation of pilotage has changed little in recent years, even though the ports and shipping industries have been experiencing almost revolutionary changes. In particular, the number of pilots and where they are located have not changed in line with changes in trade, with the result that in several places there are many more pilots than are needed.

Working practices are often archaic and pilots' time is not used to the best advantage. Productivity levels are low in a number of cases and in some ports pilots take, on average, little more than one ship in or out each week. Costs are, therefore, higher than they need be and the system needs to be changed so that productivity can be increased and costs reduced while safety standards are maintained. Under present legislation, pilots cannot be required to surrender their licences except on grounds of misconduct or incompetence.

Although the great majority of pilots are classed by the Inland Revenue as self-employed, it has been accepted for some time that reforms which would reduce their numbers would have to be accompanied by a scheme to compensate those who would leave the profession. Attempts have been made to obtain agreement between the various parties on such a compensation scheme. They have not, however, been acceptable to those who would have to foot the bill, the shipowners. The Government concluded that attempts at reform under the existing legislation were unlikely to produce the required results.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I believe that my hon. Friend just said that the average number of journeys or pilotage acts made by each pilot in the United Kingdom was one per week. Will he confirm that the number of pilotage acts by each pilot on the Humber is about 250 per year?

Mr. Spicer: I am sure that, as my hon. Friend knows his area extremely well, that figure will be confirmed. I did not say that one pilotage act per week was the average; I said that the figure was as low as that, on average. However, I have full confidence in my hon. Friend's knowledge of the Humber, and I am sure that his statistics are impeccable.

The proposal in the Bill is in essence a simple one—that responsibility for pilotage should be transferred to the harbour authorities. Pilotage has historically been organised separately from the ports within which pilots operate. In the majority of cases, it is run by separate pilotage authorities, of which the most important is Trinity House, which has responsibility for 40 of the 93 districts. In a number of other cases, it is true, the pilotage authority and the harbour authority are one and the same, but even there the detailed and complex legislative requirements mean that the conflicting interests have been able in practice to block reform. The movement of ships within ports now needs to be managed properly as a whole, particularly where large vessels or vessels carrying dangerous cargoes are involved. Pilotage is one of the services that a harbour authority needs to be able to offer and deploy to ensure the safe and effective conduct of its operations.

Harbour authorities will wish to ensure that the necessary pilotage service is provided for their ports as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. The present arrangements make that very difficult for them to achieve.

There is no reason whatever to believe that harbour authorities will act without a proper regard for safety in taking their decisions on pilotage, any more than they do in exercising their existing responsibilities for safety within the port. If there are any lingering doubts about that, the

duties that the Bill will place on the authorities should dispel them. The Bill will place upon harbour authorities a clear duty to consider, and to keep under consideration, what pilotage services are needed to secure the safety of ships, and whether, in the interests of safety, pilotage should be made compulsory. They will also be given a duty to provide the pilotage services that they consider necessary to secure the safety of shipping. They will be obliged under the Bill to ensure that pilot boats are safe for their purpose.

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): My hon. Friend has rightly stressed the issue of safety in the consideration of this complex and important problem. As he must know, the English channel, between Dover and Folkestone, is one of the busiest waterways in the world. Will he consider an extension of the inshore zone which at present stops short of the Goodwin Sands? I leave it to him to say whether the area is in my constituency, but is there not a case for a further extension, in the interests of safety?

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right, as he always is on safety matters—particularly in relation to the port that he represents. I can reassure him on the general safety objective. As to the extension of the area over which the harbour will have authority, particularly in so far as that applies to compulsory piloting, special procedures within the House will be needed. Within the area over which it has competence, the harbour has discretion on where it can apply compulsory piloting.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I suspect that my hon. Friend and I are concerned with the same areas. Will he confirm that we are reducing the present pilotage districts, and will he give further consideration to the point made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) before we reach the Committee stage? We are not talking about possible extensions, but we are restricting the present limitations.

Mr. Spicer: I can confirm that the area over which the harbour authorities will have competence may in some cases be less than those in which pilotage districts had original competence. There are reasons for that. Some of the districts were originally established at the turn of the century. Clearly, the competence for navigation, navigation aids and the general technology with which shipping is conducted has changed since then. However, if the competent authorities wish to increase the area over which they have compulsory pilotage powers, they will be able to do so under special procedures. We have tried to streamline those procedures as much as possible, but if there are any objections to the extensions they will be subject to the special procedures of the House.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Grave concern has been expressed by those who inhabit the regions around the north Kent coast about possible contraction of the Thames pilotage area. It has been said that crossing the English channel on the approaches to the Thames is like trying to run across a three-lane motorway. Will the Minister give us an assurance that, before any of the proposals are introduced, safety will be of paramount importance?

Mr. Spicer: I can certainly give that assurance. We are merely saying that we think that the competence for safety should rest with the harbour authorities, which will certainly have the power, if they wish to do so, to extend it. No doubt they will note carefully what is said in our debate, and the views of Parliament, because if there were any objections to their intention to extend their powers of competence Parliament would have the final say on the matter. But safety will certainly be paramount in the Government's mind.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): There are important and stringent regulations for the passage of tankers up the Clyde and the carrying of pilots on those vessels particularly when they pass close to Holy Loch and the nuclear submarine base. Will the Minister assure us that those stringent regulations will be adhered to vis-a-vis the devolution of pilotage authorities?

Mr. Spicer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I reflect on such a detailed question so that I can give him a proper answer rather than an answer off the top of my head. I shall consider the point carefully and give my answer in writing at the end of the debate, or when the Bill is in Committee.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): If compulsory pilotage is required by an authority outside its area, a shipowner has the right to object to the Secretary of State. But will my hon. Friend explain why the Bill will not permit a shipowner to object to compulsory pilotage inside the area of the authority's competence?

Mr. Spicer: We have taken the view that somebody must be in charge. The modernisation that is implicit in the Bill has been inhibited because so many people have got in on the management act. Port authorities have been given the responsibility to take decisions of that kind.

One advantage of placing pilotage responsibility on the harbour authorities is that decisions can be taken where they should be taken, at local level, taking into the account the nature of the traffic in the port and the local hazards that have to be encountered. I hope that to some extent that meets the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed).

It has rightly been said that the approaches to no two ports are the same. The involvement of bodies at national level, including the Department of Transport, would only serve, as it has served under the present system, to encourage local arguements to be referred upwards when they can and should be matters for local decision.

I shall not trouble the House by going through the Bill clause by clause, but I draw the attention of right hon. and hon. Members to a few points that I know have been troubling some of them. Clause 4 deals with the arrangements to be made between authorities and pilots for the provision of pilots' services. A number of types of arrangement will be possible, involving either employment by the authority or an agent or agreements with self-employed pilots.

A harbour authority will be able to employ pilots directly, if it wishes. If pilots insist on direct employment, the harbour authority will be obliged to provide it, whether or not that is what the harbour authority wants. If, however, a majority of local pilots agree that the obligation to employ them directly need not apply, the harbour authority will itself be able to choose either direct employment or some other arrangement.

Harbour authorities will have several means of controlling pilotage costs through their control over

[Mr. Spicer]

charges and over the terms of contract for the provision of pilotage services where they are not employing pilots directly. We do not, therefore, consider that it will be necessary for the harbour authorities to have the power to withdraw pilot authorisation on the ground that the number of pilots is greater than is required where pilotage is being provided under a service contract and the pilots may be self-employed. I shall therefore be introducing an amendment in Committee that will limit the powers of harbour authorities in this respect.

Clause 7 deals with compulsory pilotage and empowers competent harbour authorities to issue pilotage directions specifying the ships, areas and circumstances in which it is to apply.

In another place my noble Friend the Minister with responsibility for shipping resisted an amendment to the Bill that was intended to exempt pleasure craft from compulsory pilotage. My noble Friend took the view that it was very unlikely in practice that competent harbour authorities would wish to make pilotage compulsory for pleasure craft — except, possibly, the very largest of them. My noble Friend felt, however, that, in line with the underlying principle of the Bill, it was right to leave it to the local harbour authorities to make this decision about pleasure craft in the light of local circumstances. However, concern has continued to be expressed by hon. Members on behalf of yachtsmen, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). Since it is of little practical consequence, my noble Friend and I have decided that in Committee I should introduce an amendment to exempt all but the very largest sailing yachts from compulsory pilotage.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I very much welcome this change of heart by the Government. I thank them for considering the well argued representations of the Royal Yachting Association that have been clearly put to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport through the House of Commons yacht club, of which I have the honour to be secretary.

Mr. Spicer: I think that my hon. Friend does himself an injustice. He put forward extremely cogently the association's arguments on its behalf.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): On the first amendment that the Minister said that he will introduce in Committee, I think he will agree that clause 4 is very difficult to comprehend. Did he say that the effect of his amendment would be that if there were self-employed pilots in a given area they rather than the harbour authority would determine the number of pilots?

Mr. Spicer: That will be the effect. The pilots would determine the number, irrespective of and without prejudice to the budget for the self-employed agency.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): What is the significance of that concession? I understood that the effect of the Bill would be to spread the cost between a larger number of people. Now it will be borne by a smaller number of people. What difference will that make to those who have to pay the charges? Furthermore, how many jobs will be lost from British ports to European ports?

Mr. Spicer: There should be no effect on the self-employed. A budget will be established for the agency of self-employed pilots. Under the amendment, it would be up to the agent of the self-employed pilots to determine how many pilots he employed. It should make no difference to the cost, but it would give flexibility and discretion to the self-employed pilots.

Mr. Sayeed: I regret my hon. Friend's statement that he is to introduce an amendment to clause 4. One of the benefits of reducing the number of pilots is that all pilots will be kept up to date by constantly practising pilotage. His suggestion means that in some areas self-employed pilots will not undertake many acts of pilotage and that they will not be so up to date with the changing patterns in the estuary, or wherever they are piloting.

Mr. Spicer: I do not understand why that should be so. The budget will be determined by the port authority and the agency. It is unlikely that the pilots will overman their agency; I do not think that my hon. Friend needs to be concerned about that. The ports will not lose control either over charging or over the budgets, but we are saying — quite properly and fairly, I believe — that the self-employing agencies should be able to decide how many people work for them. They would not be in business for very long if they were overmanned and exceeded their budgets. So long as we leave control over charging and budgeting to the ports, as we have, my hon. Friend's fears are not well founded.

Dr. Godman: I have one final question that relates to the explanatory memorandum. Is there not a typographical error in the explanation of clause 6? Should it not read

"competent harbour authorities to approve and license pilot boats"?

The explanation refers to harbour authorities approving or licensing pilot boats. Is there not an error there?

Mr. Spicer: Probably. I shall look at that point later and come back on it to the hon. Gentleman. It is a point of detail, and I do not think he would expect me to go into it during a Second Reading speech.

The good sense of the general principle that harbour authorities should be responsible for pilotage has been widely recognised since the publication of the Green Paper in 1984. The Select Committee on Transport reached that conclusion when it examined pilotage in 1985. I believe that it is also increasingly accepted that the detail of our proposals provides fair treatment for those affected.

The Bill provides a statutory compensation scheme for those for whom there will no longer be work as pilots. That is an unusual benefit to provide for people classed as self-employed. The ability of pilots who continue to insist on harbour authorities offering them direct employment, if that is what they want locally, together with the temporary arbitration procedure, will give an assurance of fair treatment as they enter the new arrangements. The Bill also deals fairly with employees of pilotage authorities.

I share the general feeling that it would be most regrettable if the experience of pilotage which Trinity House has gained over so many years were lost. I am glad to know that Trinity House has formed a new subsidiary company — Trinity House Agency Services Ltd — which will be able to offer services on an agency basis to harbour authorities, not merely in those districts already served by Trinity House. We have tried in the Bill — for example, in our treatment of pension liabilities — to give Trinity

House Agency Services a fair start. I am sure that many competent harbour authorities will look seriously at the option of using that service.

It is fair to say that many initial misgivings about the Bill have been overcome and that all parties want to ensure that the new arrangements are as workable and as effective as possible. I warmly welcome the discussions between representatives of the British Ports Association and the United Kingdom Pilots Association (Marine). They have led to improvements in a number of the Bill's provisions as well as covering a number of matters which go beyond it.

The Bill's proposals will allow this service essential to the safety of shipping to meet current needs better than at present. At the same time it will free pilotage from the cumbersome statutory procedures which have made it difficult to adapt to changing circumstances. The reduction in unnecessary costs must be of benefit to the future prosperity of our ports. The future well-being of the pilotage professions, as well as the economy, are intimately linked to the prosperity of our ports. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.22 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): In House of Commons terms this is a small but important measure. Its importance is demonstrated by the number of hon. Members present on both sides of the House.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): We are surrounded by water.

Mr. Stott: That will be a theme of my contribution.

The Bill is contentious in some respects but it is not politically contentious, so the Opposition do not intend to divide the House.

Mr. Frank Field: That is an extraordinary comment. Many of us represent ports' interests and are fearful of further job losses to Europe. That is a political issue of the first importance. It might not be a party issue, and perhaps there will be agreement across the Chamber, but perhaps some of us will divide the House. Surely it is a political issue.

Mr. Stott: My hon. Friend represents Birkenhead on the Mersey and has a definite constituency interest. I am saying, with the authority of speaking from the Front Bench, that the main thrust of the Bill is not politically contentious. I disagree with many provisions in the Bill, but I have no doubt that they will be dealt with in Committee. The Bill does not create a major political divide between the two main parties.

The House of Lords spent much time scrutinising the Bill. Those hon. Members who read *Hansard* will see that the House of Lords dealt with the Bill in detail.

I, with others, have had the opportunity of discussing the Bill with those whom it will affect. We have discussed it with the General Council of British Shipping, the British Ports Association, Trinity House and the pilots. Naturally, there are substantial differences of opinion. Our job in Committee will be to attempt to reconcile some of the differences and to ensure that the Bill makes practical common sense.

Britain has a long and proud maritime history. Our Royal Navy is still the finest in the world. Our merchant fleet once used to dominate world shipping. It is a great tragedy that our merchant fleet has declined. Britain exports 80 per cent. of its goods by sea. Ever since the time of Henry VIII there has been pilotage in and out of our ports. We should do nothing in this legislation which will diminish or undermine the skill of pilots in their difficult job. We must ensure that we do nothing to undermine the safety of ships entering or leaving the United Kingdom.

I do not quarrel with the Bill's principles, provided that the pilot's authority, when in charge of a ship, remains supreme, as it is, and as is provided in section 74(2) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1984. Pilotage should be the responsibility of the ports. The pilots themselves have given the reform qualified support. Their principal qualification is that the Bill must ensure a pilotage system which makes the safety of navigation the first priority. The Bill must do that. It must make the safety of navigation the first priority above commercial values or benefits to the ports. The Bill must also ensure fair and equitable treatment for pilots during transfer to and in the new system.

Clauses 2 and 7 give powers to port authorities to determine which vessel, if any, should be subject to compulsory pilotage. The stated objective of reform is to reduce costs. Behind that is the general philosophy that ports, being in competition with each other, will fine tune the pilotage system as much as possible. In so doing, is there not a considerable risk that they will fine tune to such an extent that it might be acceptable in commercial terms but totally unacceptable in environmental risk terms?

Clause 2, as amended in the House of Lords, places a duty on competent harbour authorities to have regard in particular to vessels carrying dangerous and obnoxious cargoes. Whether that is sufficient is questionable because an incident involving a tanker carrying heavy oil could have tremendous environmental consequences, whereas an incident involving a vessel carrying light oil, chemicals or, especially, gas could have catastrophic consequences for life and property if the vessel passes close to urban centres. What about ships that carry nuclear waste? In all the cases mentioned I believe that public interest overrides the narrower commercial case. Rather than face a duty to pay regard to the hazards involved, legislation should impose firm directives on all port authorities. I believe that that is exemplified by the intention to ban certain types of vessels from using the Minches, which can be considered open waters in comparison with the Channel and our other leading ports.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Before the hon. Gentleman goes off to the Minches, I should like to draw attention to the question of safety, which is causing deep anxiety in areas such as Teesside. The position that he has described appertains in that region. There is a nuclear power station there and hazardous substances are used by the petrochemical and steel industries. Therefore, many hazardous substances are going up and down the river. Before the debate ends, I look forward to an assurance by the Minister that those anxieties can be allayed.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman speaks with the authority of representing that region, which has a large petrochemical plant. The country that exemplifies the theory and the practice of free market forces, the United States, imposes rigid criteria on the movement of vessels, especially those carrying petrochemicals. Therefore, I

[Mr. Stott]

believe that it is absolutely essential that we should do the same. When the Bill is in Committee I trust that we shall have a debate about that issue.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I wish to confirm the reference to the Minches, with which my constituency is conterminous. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that for many years the Scottish Guild of Pilots has been pressing for compulsory pilotage in that area? Vessels laden with oil from Sullom Voe may go down the Minches for shelter. If there was an accident, there would be enormous pollution and that would result in many fish hatcheries and so on being killed off within the area.

Mr. Stott: The right hon. Gentleman draws attention to an especially important question. From my days in the Merchant Navy I remember on one particular occasion we sailed through the Minches without a pilot. Admittedly, we were in a fairly small ship—not a tanker, but a Bowater ship carrying paper pulp. The distances between which a ship has to navigate are quite small. A foreign flag skipper in a large tanker could find those waters extremely difficult to navigate. The right hon. Gentleman has made a sound point.

An important clause within the Bill concerns pilot boats. Clause 6 gives total control to competent harbour authorities to determine standards in relation to the provision and standards of pilot boats. Those boats operate in all weather conditions, even when the commercial ships that they serve are seeking shelter. Pilots' lives depend upon them. Pilotage is a dangerous occupation. In recent years on average at least one pilot has been seriously injured or killed annually as a result of boarding or landing incidents. That represents 0·1 per cent. of pilots. If we exclude those who work in the North sea, that represents a higher accident rate than any other group of professional worker.

Is it right that there should be no statutory regulations in the future? Draft guidelines were generally agreed in 1983, but I believe that they have never been implemented. The House should pay regard to the Select Committee on Transport and its report of 1985, especially paragraphs 125 and 126. They dealt with licensing and manning standards. The Committee strongly recommended that the responsibility for pilot boats, manning standards, the level of operation and efficiency should lie with the Department of Transport. It recommended that manning standards should be agreed between the local pilots and the Department's surveyors and that the Secretary of State should make regulations for such boats under section 2 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1979.

I now wish to turn to what I, and no doubt other hon. Members, consider the most contentious issue in the Bill—the pilotage exemption certificate. The Bill imposes an obligation on competent harbour authorities to issue a pilotage exemption certificate to the master of any ship provided that he can demonstrate that he has sufficient skill, experience and local knowledge to pilot the vessel into their harbour. The harbour authority will be unable to exclude those classes of vessels to which reference has already been made and to which competent harbour authorities must pay particular regard under clause 2(2). In my view, a belt and braces attitude is required. The harbour authority will be unable to pay regard to the sometimes suspect insular regimes operated on ships. For example, the authority will be unable to pay regard to physical conditions on board such ships—whether the ships are over-manned or under-manned or whether the crew is tired. The authorities will be able to provide the exemption certificates on the basis of flimsy evidence. I believe that the exemptions from pilotage certificates will accelerate the decline of our already declining merchant fleet. It will encourage aliens to dominate to a greater extent not only in our deep sea trades but also in our home trades.

I have discussed this matter with members of the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers which organises the officers on board our merchant ships. Many NUMAST ship-masters already hold pilotage exemption certificates. NUMAST is anxious to ensure that its members are treated fairly when it comes to the granting or renewal of such certificates. Nevertheless, NUMAST is astounded at the limited power given to competent harbour authorities to grant exemption certificates without any restrictions as to the flag of the ship, the standard of the ship, the nationality of the master or first mate of that ship, their command of the English language or, indeed, the trading patterns of that ship. I notice that the Minister gibed slightly when I mentioned the question of the English language. I accept an amendment relating to the English language has been introduced in the other place, but, even so, it is not explicit enough.

There would be a safeguard if we could at least restrict such certificates of exemption to the masters and first mates of EEC flag ships. It should also be specified that such masters and first mates should be required to be regular traders within the particular port.

Given the present state of the United Kingdom's shipping industry, I believe that there is no justification for allowing ships of any flag to enter our ports on the basis of pilotage exemption certificates. Such a policy would allow and encourage third flag carriers of dubious standards, in some cases receiving direct or indirect subsidies, to compete with our industry that is neither subsidised nor supported.

Mr. Moate *rose*—

Mr. Stott: I shall give way in a moment.

The House will be aware that the United Kingdom does not operate the principle of cabotage. Our coasts are open to any foreign flag. However, there is precious little in terms of reciprocal agreements with any of our European partners. To institute a system of pilotage exemption certificates, especially for coastal vessels, will spell the end of our coastal trade as we know it. Moreover, it will encourage some British operators and shipowners to flag out as they flag out their deep sea vessels. It will be one more encouragement for British operators to leave the British flag. That will happen if we have a system of pilotage exemption certificates as envisaged in the Bill.

Mr. Moate: There will be considerable cost involved in gaining such a certificate and it is unlikely that that cost will incurred unless a master is visiting port at fairly frequent intervals. In doing so he would gain familiarity with the port and earn his exemption certificate.

Mr. Stott: There is no limitation on exemption certificates. A certificate could be given to any master of any ship because the Minister and the draftsmen have not

provided specific detail. Any master of any ship can gain a certificate. Masters will have to satisfy certain conditions in respect of their knowledge of a port, including the regularity of their entries into and departures from it. But is it right that a competent harbour authority—it will be only the authority, not the Secretary of State, Trinity House or the Pilotage Commission—should have sole responsibility for the granting of a certificate?

Mr. Crouch: I do not follow the hon. Gentleman's great concern about the possible harm to coastal trade and traffic. The small port of Whitstable in my constituency will be a competent harbour authority. Coastal traffic from Cornwall to Whitstable brings granite to be broken in quarry or sand and gravel operations at Whitstable. It is dependent on two vessels of 400 to 500 tonnes coming from Cornwall each week to deliver the granite. They do not need a pilot to enable them safely to enter the small port of Whitstable, and that has been argued to me by the operators of the port. The masters make the journey twice a week; they know the port better than any pilot who might be called upon to bring in the vessels once every six weeks. I do not understand how the exemption certificate arrangements could harm that traffic, which admittedly is all under the British flag.

Mr. Stott: The hon. Gentleman answers his own question in his last sentence. As he has said, the traffic is all under the British flag. I am not opposed to the granting of exemption certificates to masters who are currently operating in and out of United Kingdom harbours. I am saying that the Bill, if it is not amended, will open up the granting of exemption certificates in a way that will severely damage our coastal and deep-sea fleets.

Mr. Sayeed: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stott: I shall complete my argument, and if the hon. Gentleman contains himself he will have the opportunity to intervene.

For many years I acted as a quartermaster while pilots were performing their acts of pilotage on the ships in which I served. It is with that authority of experience that I believe that the granting of exemption certificates in the way that the Bill proposes will be dangerous and foolhardy and will do nothing to help existing pilots.

Mr. Sayeed: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he would be happy for the competent harbour authority to grant exemption certificates to British flag ships but not necessarily to those of other countries?

Mr. Stott: If the hon. Gentleman wants me to be absolutely bold and truthful, that is right. I should be prepared to say that masters of British flag ships that currently have exemption certificates should have the right to reapply for them. I am not in the business of writing legislation—I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not—that enables any country's flag ship, irrespective of the standard of manning levels, the level of safety and the degree of experience, to be given an exemption certificate.

I listened with interest when the Minister said that in Committee he would move an amendment to clause 4, which deals with the employment of pilots by the harbour authorities. As the Minister has said that an amendment will be introduced by the Government, I shall not delay the House by putting before it what I had to say on that issue.

Many Members on both sides of the House have continually drawn to the Government's attention the decline of our maritime fleet, and the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) are only two of them. So far the Government have criminally ignored the siren voices that have been raised on this issue. The decline is now entering its terminal stage and we must ask ourselves an important question: where in this island nation are the pilots of the future to come from? The majority of pilots have been seagoing masters or first mates, and there is no provision in the Bill for the training of pilots. I recognise that there is provision for extending the period of four years in which pilots can be replaced within their own ranks, but what happens after the four years have expired?

If we have a declining merchant fleet and pilots leave the service, for whatever reason, how is our great trading nation to find the pilots of the future? I do not know whether the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) was a master mariner, but I know that he is a qualified pilot who piloted ships in and out of the Mersey. I suspect that he was trained as a pilot on that river. But where is such training to be gained in future? From where shall we obtain pilots in future if our merchant fleet continues on its present decline? The nation will be facing a serious problem.

These are serious issues that will have to be addressed when the Bill is considered in Committee. I can say from the Opposition Dispatch Box that what the Government are trying to do in the general reorganisation of the pilotage service is to be welcomed, but there are differences of opinion on how the reorganisation should be carried out.

8.48 pm

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): I am glad to be called to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), who had great experience in the merchant navy. I must declare my interest as deputy chairman of Furness Withy Ltd., but I have nothing like the practical experience that the hon. Gentleman has enjoyed. My speech will not be on the shipping side of the problem, which is in the competent hands of the General Council of British Shipping. It will be addressed more to the problems of pilots, especially of the Humber estuary and of Goole, which is in my constituency.

Pilots are small in number but extremely vigorous and persistent in defending their interests. This is hardly surprising for, almost by definition, they are rugged individuals who spend their lives imposing their will on ships and on foreign captains. In addition to the meetings with pilots of Humberside over the past years, I spent a day, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall), on the pilot's boat going up from Spurn to Selby. It was not a particularly choppy day but at Spurn point we could get an inkling of what life must be like on a stormy winter's night.

The fact that the Bill has been through another place and has been thoroughly discussed there has disposed of a number of important issues. For a start, it is at last accepted by all interested parties, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, that pilotage should become a harbour authority function. As the Bill is the result of seven years', or more, argument and violent disagreement between the various vested interests, the problems it seeks to solve are clearly deep-seated and still far from settled, despite the long debates in another place.

[Sir Paul Bryan]

I shall deal with the situation on the Humber. I was glad to hear that over the weekend the Associated British Ports authority met some 150 pilots to discuss the amalgamation of the pilotage service on the estuary and the self-employed system it hopes will follow. I understand that by an overwhelming majority of those who voted the pilots decided to proceed with the discussions. If the talks could be successful and reach an amicable conclusion, it would be a wonderful start for the new system in the area.

The present three-part division of the Humber has meant that ships going upstream from Hull require two pilots, a Humber pilot to Hull roads and a Goole or Trent pilot for the rest of the journey. To a layman, I am bound to say that that has never looked sensible but one could see perfectly well why some pilots resisted amalgamation. It would mean significant and often highly inconvenient changes in their working practices.

One obvious difficulty of Humberside pilotage is the intense competition, not to say antagonism, between the ABP ports and the private wharves. With the switch of trade to Europe after the war, Hull, like Southampton, had a heaven-sent opportunity to develop into one of the country's leading ports. That opportunity was thrown away and Hull, far from developing, is now a shadow of its former self as a port. However, that has not killed the traffic in the estuary. The tonnage entering the Humber is actually greater than it has ever been. It has switched to the other ports in the estuary, not least to the private wharves, such as Howdendyke, Gunness and Keadby. The private wharves probably deal with more ships, if less tonnage, than the ABP ports. Those wharves are run for the benefit of the customers and not, like Hull, for the benefit of the dockers, and that is why the small docks have succeeded. I am glad to say that the port of Goole, which is an ABP port in my constituency, has excellent labour relations and is well able to compete.

That competitive background leads to the owners of the non-ABP ports questioning whether, in the matter of charges and general treatment, they will receive a service on a par with that given to the ABP ports which will, after all, be running the pilotage service.

A number of provisions in the Bill are designed to protect all users of the service, but these are matters which can best be solved by consultation between the parties concerned. I am glad that representatives of the ABP recently met the Humber district wharf owners association to explain in detail their proposals for the pilotage service. More important still, it has been agreed that, following reorganisation, there should be regular consultations between the users of the service and the operators of non-ABP port installations.

Humber pilots have expressed their concern on the future of compulsory pilotage. The fear is that as one of the main objects of reform is to reduce costs and put ports in competition with each other, in the words of the hon. Member for Wigan, the ports will "fine tune the pilotage system as much as possible." They ask for legislation which should, again in the words of the hon. Member for Wigan, "impose firm directions on all port authorities." I cannot agree with that. It would surely lead to a mass of detailed regulations of the sort we are trying to leave behind us.

I should have thought that it would be in the interests of the ABP port authority on the Humber to get a reputation for safety. The lower Humber is used by a wide variety of vessels, not only cargo vessels, but tankers carrying gas or oil products, and passenger ferries. The variety of traffic and the presence of large petrochemical installations to which ships pass very close make a strictly controlled system essential on grounds of safety. The port authority does not have to be virtuous to provide that safety; it is simply in its best interests. ABP assures me that all but the smallest vessels will either be piloted or be under the control of masters of known competence. The overriding commitment to safety, which we all share, can be discharged only if pilotage remains compulsory.

The employment of pilots is the most sensitive area of all. It is quite understandable that the amendments proposed in another place took the form of a succession of attemps by spokesmen for the pilots to get the general assurances given by the Government for their future well-being, translated into statutory form. To some extent they were successful. Amendment No. 36 on arbitration is a real advance and meets some, but not by any means all, of their worries.

However, at the end of the day, the contentment of the pilots will not depend on a parliamentary Act. As in any other industry, it will depend on the confidence built up between employer and employee, in this case the port authorities and the pilots. Problems such as compensation for pilots in years after the changeover cannot be written into a Bill. They must be a matter for negotiation and I believe the port authorities have already acknowledged that.

In an industry where earnings vary so widely from area to area, anything in the nature of a statutory guarantee that no single pilot will, after reconstruction, earn less than he does now is clearly out of the question. But, of course, it is in everybody's interest, including the port authorities', that pilots in general will not be worse off than they are now.

Proposals that consultation with pilots on such questions as pilotage orders should be written into the Bill illustrate an understandable—I stress "understandable" —lack of confidence in the future management. That is the sort of consultation I would expect naturally to take place and I hope the very large meeting that took place at the weekend between the ABP and the Humber estuary pilots will be the start of the build-up of confidence which will lead to a harmonious and effective system of pilotage so necessary to an estuary of that importance.

8.58 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As has already been said, this is a somewhat complex piece of legislation. Indeed, the word "complex" appears in almost all the letters that I have received about this Bill. Reading the reports of the debates in another place, I noted that the former Law Lord, Lord Simon of Glaisdale, challenged the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport responsible for shipping, Lord Brabazon, to explain some of the clauses without reference to his briefing notes or the explanatory notes. That is what the public will have to do. It is important, although this is a complex piece of legislation, that we realise that it is our duty in our deliberations and in Committee to express clearly the objectives of the Bill and the means of achieving them.

At the outset, I must stress that my right hon. and hon. Friends support the Government in the objectives set out in the Bill. There has been wide recognition that the

existing scheme for providing pilotage services has produced many inefficiencies—in some ports insufficient pilots to meet the demands, and, in others, a considerable surplus. As the Minister said when moving the Second Reading, the means of trying to rationalise the provision of pilots throughout the country have not been easy and many of the attempts to do that have been frustrated. There is a conflict of interest to which the Minister referred. I understand that the Letch agreement which was set up in the hope of effectively regulating to some extent the number of pilots and their proper distribution has by all accounts broken down and has not achieved its objective.

Being fair, the imbalance has been accepted by many pilots. In a letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) the honorary secretary of the Southampton and Isle of Wight Pilot Service said:

> "There appears to be little doubt that the numbers of Pilots licensed nationally is too high, and Pilots locally welcome the scheme to provide for early retirement."

According to Mr. Sparkes, the honorary secretary, that is an area in which there is a shortage of pilots. He was particularly anxious that the early retirement funds should be available to pilots in areas and authorities that are currently undermanned. I hope that the Minister will clarify that point when he replies and tell us whether the Bill allows for pilots in those areas to take early retirement with the same fairly generous provisions made in the Bill. I hope that he will also say what steps exist in the Bill to facilitate the transfer of pilots from areas where there is a surplus of pilots to areas where there will obviously be a need for the harbour authorities to engage more pilots. If the Bill is to work effectively when it becomes an Act there must be that degree of flexibility and I look forward to hearing from the Minister what steps he proposes to take to ensure that that exists.

We hope that by such rationalisation many of our ports will be able to reduce their costs and, hopefully, that will make them more competitive as between themselves and, as is the case particularly on the east and south coasts, more competitive with many European ports. Although this may not be the moment to debate light dues—I am sure that we shall have a debate on that soon—it is ironic that while we have one set of measures from the Government designed to increase competition, another set is due to be debated which alliance Members would maintain will remove the competitive edge from many of our ports.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point because it affects ports such as the Tees which are in direct competition with ports on the mainland of Europe. I hope that the Minister will be able to assure my hon. Friend that there will be no knock-on effects from the implications of the Bill which will increase costs in ports such as the Tees and make them less competitive with Rotterdam and other places on the other side of the North sea.

Mr. Wallace: I share my hon. Friend's hope that the Minister will give us an assurance about the effects of this Bill. I rather suspect that some of the pension provisions will initially at least increase the financial burden on some of the ports concerned. However, I am certain that the long-term aim is that costs should be reduced and I hope that the Minister will reassure us on that point.

The proposals were substantially endorsed by the Select Committee on Transport. From experience in my constituency of the two islands councils which are harbour authorities for Sullom Voe and Scapa Flow I am aware that the system whereby harbour authorities have employed pilots is one which, from many years' experience, has worked with considerable success.

I want to dwell to some extent on the points which the Minister announced about the amendments that he proposes to bring forward. There is some fear that we are approaching the stage where the Bill has been watered down to the extent that it might not achieve some of its objectives. Can the Minister confirm that if pilots opt for self-employment there will not be any control over the numbers employed?

The general manager of Aberdeen harbour board raised the matter with me, saying that his concern was shared by many other Scottish ports. He believes that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the harbour board to employ the pilots and to remunerate them at the level which they have reasonably come to expect in recent years. The Minister said that the harbour authority would continue to set the pilotage dues and that the amount set would dictate the number of pilots taken on by the self-employing agency. I shall be pleased to stand corrected if I am wrong, but there is bound to be a contract between the agency and the harbour board and if the harbour board rightly has a duty to provide the service but cannot afford to employ the pilots directly a major bargaining counter will be placed in the hands of the agency. I wonder to what extent the harbour board would then have the flexibility to determine the pilotage charges as it wishes.

The scheme is set out in clause 4(2). The Minister has said that the pilots can insist on direct employment by the harbour authority, but the two authorities in my constituency are concerned about whether the inverse is true and the authority can insist on direct employment. That is clearly a matter of concern when arrangements have been in operation for many years. Despite numerous assurances from Ministers, including Lord Brabazon, I am not sure that clause 4(2) actually achieves that, but perhaps we can go into that aspect in more detail in Committee.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The hon. Gentleman raises two points. In a way, the one answers the other, but I shall try to deal with them briefly. The Bill makes it clear that the harbour authority makes the ultimate decision as to whether to employ people directly. That gives the authority the leverage in determining the costs of an agency relationship if that is what it wants. The authority will also be able to determine how many people to employ if it decides to employ directly. The idea that there is no leverage—I believe that some of my hon. Friends are also concerned about this—in determining the budget for the agency relationship is thus not correct because the authority has the alternative of employing people directly in the numbers that it wishes.

Mr. Wallace: I follow what the Minister says, but there is a practical problem. Aberdeen harbour board feels that it could not employ sufficient pilots and pay them as much as they now receive, and if there were a substantial reduction in earnings pilots might not wish to be employed there. To employ them at the present remuneration, however, would skew salary and wage arrangements with all other employees. Therefore, although I accept the

[Mr. Wallace]

Minister's point in theory, I believe that it will be very difficult for harbour authorities to work this out in practice. We shall certainly wish to scrutinise this aspect carefully when the Minister brings forward his amendment in Committee.

I think that the whole House agrees that there should be no cost-cutting in relation to safety. Over many years our pilots have shown themselves to have great expertise and professional skill. As those qualities will in no way be diminished by the Bill, we can expect the high safety standards to be maintained.

The issue of compulsory pilotage has already been raised. It was stated that there should be no encouragement or incentive to cut costs by trying to limit the areas of compulsory pilotage. There should be some scope for an overview. Clause 7(4) provides for some consultation with users. It is equally important that there should be some provision for consultation to take account of public interests. The other side of the coin has been of concern to the General Council of British Shipping. If there is any proposal to extend the pilotage limits, that will have consequences for the shipowners in cost terms and it will wish to see some right of appeal. This issue should not be determined solely by the harbour authority without any further recourse for appeal.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) raised the issue of exemption certificates. I was grateful to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) for pinning down the hon. Member for Wigan because it transpired that he was seeking a ban on all exemption certificates for foreign vessels, which is blatantly protectionism by the back door —*[Interruption.]* If that is not the correct interpretion of what the hon. Gentleman was asking for, I shall certainly give way.

Mr. Stott: If the hon. Gentleman was listening, I said that I believe, as do many people, that the way in which the Bill is drafted at the moment will allow exemption certificates to be given to foreign nationals who, in my view, should not have them. That is not to say that if a ship, especially an EEC flag ship—I did use the words an EEC flag ship — had a regular run between this country and, for example, Germany, there could clearly be a case for the master or the first mate of that ship being given an exemption certificate, as is the case with a British master. However, the drafting of the Bill will allow a coach and horses to be driven through the legislation and exemption certificates will proliferate like confetti unless we tidy it up.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that clarification. I note that in those provisions it is important that local knowledge be taken into account before the exemption certificate is granted. That will not give scope to open up the legislation so that the coach and horses suggested by the hon. Gentleman could be driven through it. The points that have been raised about manning levels and the quality of other vessels should be dealt with, but are not perhaps appropriate in this legislation.

Exemption certificates should not apply if the cargoes are deemed to be hazardous. Clause 2 refers to dangerous goods and harmful substances. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) has already drawn attention to the many hazardous substances which come in and out of the Tees. In my constituency is Scapa Flow and Sullom Voe, and we have problems with such hazardous substances. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has reminded me that Merseyside also has that problem. Public interest would look for the control of exemption certificates if the substances carried were especially hazardous.

On a point of administrative detail, clause 10(3) provides for charging the masters of ships even where there are exemption certificates. As the service has not necessarily been given, perhaps the Minister could explain the basis of that charge.

Finally, I should like to refer briefly to several constituency points to which I do not necessarily expect the Minister to give me detailed replies tonight, but perhaps he could advise me that replies will be forthcoming shortly because that would obviate the need for unnecessary amendments. As I have already stated, the system whereby harbour authorities employ pilots has existed for many years in Orkney and Shetland. We now face some difficulties with this legislation which will impose a statutory framework on a situation which has already settled down and is working smoothly. Inevitably, there are areas of discrepancy that we wish to see resolved. The Bill provides, for example, an arbitration procedure. However, the pilots who are employed by the local authorities already have their own contracts with built-in arbitration procedures. I doubt whether it is intended that there should be provision for double arbitration. Under existing legislation there is a consolidation charge in respect of vessels going into the Flotta oil terminal. Orkney Islands council sought the repetition of previous legislation so that the consolidated charge agreed between the local authorities and the operators of the terminals might continue.

The composition of the examination committee in cases of a breach of discipline is important. At present local government legislation does not allow a member of staff to sit on what is effectively a council committee. While some steps have been taken in regard to that in clause 3(8), the provision does not cover the case where the person concerned is not a licensed pilot. Often, because of his seniority and the fact that he has not been engaged in pilot activities, the harbour master has lost his pilot's licence. Nevertheless, he is an important person who should be involved in determining discipline cases.

My final constituency point relates to the areas of Shetland outwith Sullom Voe but within the remit of the Shetland Islands council, particularly Scalloway. At present, it has an informal structure, but the local harbour authority wishes to extend pilotage. There are difficulties fitting that into the Bill.

That experience of the local authorities leads me to believe that the system can work and retain the high safety levels to which we have become accustomed and which are paramount. Therefore, my right hon. and hon. Friends will support the Government on Second Reading.

9.16 pm

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) rightly said that the Bill was remarkably complex. Some idea of its complexity will be gained from the fact that I found myself warming more to the reservations of the hon.

Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) than to the wider issues raised in the scenario painted by my hon. Friend the Minister.

My feeling about the Bill is that it does nothing to resolve three critical problems. First, it does not follow from the Bill that pilotage will become a safer occupation for pilots. Secondly, it does not follow that the new shape of pilotage will be any more cost-effective for the owners of the ships using the service. Thirdly, it does not follow that it makes sense to tack pilotage on as a further and ancillary service to the many other and often conflicting services provided by port authorities.

The question of the safety of pilot boats has already been touched on by my hon. Friend the Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) and the hon. Member for Wigan. There is little reassurance in what I have heard so far to take back to the pilots of Falmouth to contradict the reported views of certain local harbour commissioners regarding the all-important question of the suitability and safety of cutters.

One harbour commissioner has suggested that a pilot cutter and its crew are not necessary since pilots could as easily board vessels from a tug or a quay punt. Another commissioner has complained that the local pilot cutter is worth more than a third of a million pounds. The cutter in question underlines the fundamental anxiety of pilots for safety because the Falmouth pilot cutter, the L K Mitchell, is named after a local pilot who was killed only a few years ago, putting the safety of the cutter's crew ahead of his safety and his life. The cutter that admittedly has cost a third of a million pounds is the result of a century of evolution away from using tugs and quay punts. Indeed, the design of the vessel has been endorsed by the General Council of British Shipping and the sub-commissioners of pilotage as being the most cost-effective cutter for the port while still embracing economic, safety and environmental factors.

Since the L K Mitchell came into service, on occasion she has been the only vessel in the port of Falmouth able to put out on a deep-sea mission. She has repeatedly played her part in rescues and in the conveyance of sick and injured seamen. Therefore, to suggest that the pilots of the port of Falmouth should use quay punts or tugs horrifies those who risk their lives in the interests of others. On a personal note, it horrifies me, as my father was one of many Falmouth pilots who, in the course of their duties, were crushed between the cutter and the ship when adapted and modified quay punts were used as pilot cutters.

It has been suggested by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport that the Bill will prove to be more cost-effective for the industry. Again, I suggest that in the case of Falmouth it may well turn out to be exactly the opposite.

I was amazed by the statistics showing one pilot somewhere doing one mission per week. We know that it is not the Humber—we have been told that. We have been told all the places that it is not—we have not been told where it is, but it certainly is not in Falmouth. At present, the six Falmouth pilots give three-pilot cover 24 hours a day, resulting in 84 hours duty availability per pilot per week. The boatmen operate to the same roster. A 24-hour VHF service, a telephone service, as well as secretarial and office services, are freely available to those who wish to avail themselves of them.

Mr. Moate: In view of what my hon. Friend says about the level of activities which will presumably be shared by the new harbour authority, why should he be concerned? Obviously all the pilots will remain in employment.

Mr. Mudd: As my hon. Friend will note, if he contains himself, my question refers more to the competence of the harbour authority than to the ability of pilots to do their jobs effectively.

If the pilotage service moves to the 39-hour week, on the General Council of British Shipping formula, Falmouth's six pilots would either have to multiply to become 15·9 pilots or obtain massive overtime payments, at the cost of the ship operator. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State also suggested that pilotage should become another service provided by the ports. I would not argue against that, but I would argue against the likelihood of pilotage becoming an ancillary port service in which the independent advice and independent services now often voluntarily provided by a pilot might be directed by the port authority and charged to shipowners. Harbour authorities have a great deal more financially to gain if a ship is brought into port rather than left safely at anchor outside the limits, while equipment, charts, and men are carried out to it.

Pilots must not be forced to act as salesmen for other port services. Additionally, a pilot's skill is recognised and respected by a ship master because he accepts that the pilot is there for one task alone—safe navigation. If pilots are to become some sort of floating Kleen-Ezee salesmen, as they could under the Bill, and pilot cutters are to become bumboats, trading other services, that trust, respect and bond will be in peril.

I refer now to the much-vaunted phrase "competent harbour authorities". It will reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate). It is true that harbour authorities may be competent in business management, but it does not always follow that they are competent in the ways, traditions, knowledge and skills of pilotage. One Falmouth harbour commissioner has accused local pilots of acting like vultures in overmanning and overcharging. He said that the commissioners will "make the pilots tighten their belts."

My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) spoke about the importance of confidence in pilots and the competence of those who employ them. That is a crucial point in the Bill. Should harbour commissioners, with no experience of the stress, strain, dangers and experience of the problems of pilotage, be responsible for introducing policies that will direct pilotage operations?

With reference to the port of Falmouth, the argument is firmly weighted against the commissioners becoming the pilotage authority as we already have a highly efficient estuarial service covering the needs of Falmouth harbour commissioners, the reawakening of the sector covered by the Truro harbour commissioners, the potential regeneration of the port of Penryn, the needs of Falmouth docks, the interests of Carrick district council and of Kerrier district council and, to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), the interests of Dean quarry and the Lizard ports which send the granite into the Kent ports.

It would be a nightmare and nonsense to entrust this responsibility to anything other than an estuarial authority in terms of the port of Falmouth. A Secretary of State for Transport recognised this very point a few years ago when

[Mr. Mudd]

he refused the Falmouth harbour commissioners permission to run their limits conterminous with those of the pilotage district. Harbour authorities must not be allowed in any circumstances to become pilotage authorities until they have proved that they can run a safe and cost-effective service enjoying the good will of the industry and, above all, the absolute confidence and respect of the pilots themselves.

My hon. Friend the Minister spoke at the beginning of the debate about his great expectations for this Bill. My mind went back to that great Charles Dickens novel of the same name and to its dramatic climax in which the escaping convict Magwitch meets a horrifying death in the Thames when he is in a pilot gig. The great expectations of the ports, of the General Council of British Shipping and of the Department must not be allowed to endanger pilotage practice and the great tradition of pilotage in the United Kingdom.

9.26 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The fact that this Bill is not politically controversial does not mean that it should not be very closely examined, as it was to some extent in another place. The organisation of pilotage has remained substantially unchanged since the Pilotage Act 1913. The Pilotage Act 1983 was merely a consolidating measure. I understand that the Bill has the support of the General Council of British Shipping and of Trinity House, and, although not all of its recommendations are being carried out, even the Select Committee on Transport is in favour of it.

Nevertheless, I cannot resist the suspicion that this legislation comes about now as much because of the decline in our merchant fleet—a decline that is aided and abetted by the Government's policies — as of anything else. It seems to me not a coincidence that, although there has been a continuing decline over a long time in the port of Liverpool, it has accelerated since 1979, since when, as we know, there has been a cutting in half of the number of ships in our merchant marine and in the number of our mariners who sail in them.

The Bill asks us to cut our coats according to our much diminished cloth. There are about 1,300 marine pilots, and this is perceived as being too many, given the lower levels of traffic entering British ports. I should like to pose a number of questions which require positive answers if the Bill is to progress through further stages towards the statute book. I do not think that the answers to all of these questions were given when the Bill went through the other place.

In a joint memorandum by the British Ports Association and the General Council of British Shipping, one of the deficiencies of the present pilotage system was said to be that the organisations of the pilotage system are composed of representatives who often have conflicting interests. It is not clear to me how this conflict in interest is to be avoided merely by transferring the functions to harbour authorities, even though the Labour party is not in principle against the idea in the Bill.

The Pilotage Commission and Trinity House give much valuable advice to the Secretary of State. They provide expertise which we should nurture. The Pilotage Commission is to be wound up. We are entitled to know at what point that will occur and who will then advise the Secretary of State. We have heard from the Secretary of State that Trinity House has floated a subsidiary company which will assist in the implementation of the Bill, but the guidance which Trinity House has given has been invaluable in maintaining the present high standards. What is to be the future role of Trinity House in the pilotage system?

In a letter of 23 March the British Ports Association said:

"Direct employment has to be offered to the pilots but they and the CHA"—

the competent harbour authorities—

"may agree an alternative arrangement. This may involve an agency agreement using a body like Trinity House, or a separate company being set up which the pilots may jointly operate under contract to the competent harbour authority which may involve self employment."

I hope that, to protect their interests, the pilots will be assisted in evolving co-operatives of pilots so that they will be not only still self-employed but more able collectively to protect their vital interests.

What of the pilots? For example, we should address ourselves to their qualifications. If the qualifications of pilots are to be the responsibility of competent harbour authorities, will these not be purely local decisions, perhaps threatening the present high standards? Will this lead to a complete lack of uniformity? Will the qualifications for a pilot's certificate in Liverpool differ from those for a pilot's certificate in Falmouth, on the Clyde or on the Humber? We need some guidelines. Will there be guidelines or statutory instruments to ensure that there are sufficiently high uniform standards?

My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) has rightly drawn attention to exemption certificates. Again, here is decentralisation to a fault. If every competent harbour authority is to be responsible for deciding how many exemption certificates and under what conditions they will be issued, will there not be a great temptation for harbour authorities to go in for cost cutting and to give exemption certificates with great abandon? What statutory hold will the Government have over the activities of ports authorities to ensure that exemption certificates will not be given unless, of course, stringent guidelines are followed?

The Select Committee on Transport recommended that responsibility for licensing and manning standards should be a Department of Transport responsibility. Why has that recommendation not been accepted? Until the ship owners withdrew in 1984, the earnings of pilots were subject to the Letch agreement between themselves and the pilots. With the Bill, will pilots have any machinery through which to appeal if local negotiations break down?

The Minister touched only briefly on the subject of compensation. Can the statutory compensation package that was agreed between the pilots and the British Ports Association be sustained? Will existing benefits, including those for early retirement, be protected?

In a statement issued on 21 November last year, Trinity House warned:

"it will also be financially impossible to create a commercial company able to offer advantageous rates if that company has to assume the financial burden of superannuation and/or redundancy payments to its staff".

How is fair and equitable treatment of pilots to be guaranteed? What machinery is being set up to help pilots who are made redundant to move to other parts of our coastline?

My constituents were told by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in his capacity as chairman of the Conservative party, to get on their bikes. Will the Tory party chairman now tell the pilots to take to their bikes without making proper provision for them? That question needs careful examination. It is all right to say that there should be mobility of labour and that pilots should be prepared to move around, but all too often, when we ask our people to move, we do not examine the social consequences in the areas that they leave, the difficulties of housing, the education of children and all the problems of looking after dependants. What assistance will the Government provide to ensure that pilots who are surplus in one area can supply the needs of another, without the dire consequences of which we should all be aware?

The pilots are a loyal body of men on whose bravery and ability—mainly unseen and unheralded—the vital trade of these islands has, to a considerable extent, depended. They are entitled to genuine consideration by the House, and I hope that, in Committee, not only the amendment to clause 4, to which the Minister referred, but new clauses will be added to give more protection to pilots who are made redundant, and to ensure that safety, not commercial profit, remains supreme — including the necessary provision for control over exemption certificates.

9.38 pm

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): The House will know of my special and, I think, peculiar interest in this subject. Once, many years ago, I was told that a Member of the House had been a member of the pilotage profession. That has not actually been proved, and, as far as I know, in this century I am the only member of that proud profession to be a Member of the House.

Liverpool is one of the ports that is most affected by the Bill. I have been asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), to whom I was talking only today, to apologise to the House for her absence this evening, which is due to a ministerial commitment. Many of her constituents who are former colleagues of mine went to see her as recently as yesterday to express their grave concern about the future of pilots who would be affected by the Bill. I heartily endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd), but he was arguing against the principle of the Bill and that battle has been fought and lost.

As many hon. Members have said, the issue is complex and its history goes back over many years. Since I was elected to the House in 1979 I have dealt with five Ministers on this subject. My hon. Friend who opened the debate is Minister No. 6—or perhaps he is No. five and a half, because he is acting for our noble Friend Lord Brabazon of Tara. I have has considerable co-operation from Ministers and I am sure that my pilotage colleagues appreciate the efforts that have been made, particularly during the Bill's passage through another place, to meet the fundamental points that they put.

There is no disagreement about the need for reform, and there have been a number of attempts to find a solution. The Pilotage Commission was established by the Merchant Shipping Act 1979 which was cobbled together hastily as an agreed deal in the run-up to the general election. Many of us felt that the 1979 measure provided an opportunity to tackle some of the inherent problems that had grown up over many years because of changing patterns of trade and so on. They should have been dealt with in a comprehensive, comprehensible and sensible way, but the Pilotage Commission was not given the teeth that it needed to tackle the problems, to make decisions and to knock together the heads of some of the parties.

There has been a failure of communication and in many ways this is a sad Bill. It is sad that it has had to come before the House. I have experience of the profession. Indeed, I was a pilots' representative and had to negotiate with the Pilotage Commission and I talked to representatives from other ports, so I do not have a narrow, insular view.

Many of us were worried that no agreement was reached. We were drifting and we knew that if changes were not organised from within they would be imposed from outside. However, it is odd that, while many other countries are talking about increasing the protection of their coastal waters and extending pilotage cover, we may be going in the opposite direction.

The steering committee on pilotage made some clear recommendations in 1974 about the need for protection in our coastal waters. Memories of the Torrey Canyon and other such disasters fade from many people's memories, but some of the cargoes being carried throughout the world, the size of some ships and the competence of some crews militate strongly against cutting pilotage cover.

A famous report in Canada said that a pilot was the equivalent of an environmental protection officer. I talk from personal experience, because I have been on some ships carrying very strange cargoes. If anything had gone wrong, the potential for damage would have been almost limitless. The prospects for the environment and for the safety of life and limb and of the other users of the port were unimaginable. These are not idle words. As a former pilot, I have often said that if a pilot performs only one act of pilotage a year in which he prevents something like that from happening he has earned his salary and that of his colleagues 50 times over. That is what pilotage is about.

We have also seen changed patterns of trade. I refer again to Liverpool, because it is a classic example of a need for change that has been long delayed. We have seen the collapse of far east and north Atlantic trade and, following our accession to Europe, we have ended up—as it were —facing the wrong way. We have seen a service which, when I was a member, boasted some 175 pilots reduced to about 130 pilots. They work hard, but it is recognised that their numbers can and should come down. The new legislation has massive implications for those men and for their attitudes in the future. Few if any hon. Members understand that, because to understand it is necessary to be part of it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne spoke of the independence of pilots. Our greatest strength, and the pilot's greatest strength, is that he is independent and known to be independent. It is recognised that he has a primary responsibility to the master and crew of the ship where he is performing his act of pilotage, and to other users of the waterways in which he is piloting. That independence is vitally important, but there is a serious danger that it could be eroded if pressures other than safety considerations are imposed.

The hardest job for a pilot is to say no. He knows that if he does not dock a ship, there is demurrage; tugs and shore gangs have been ordered; and he is incurring considerable losses for that ship. He knows that, if such losses are incurred, the competitiveness of his port and,

[Mr. Malcolm Thornton]

ultimately, his own livelihood will be harmed. Therefore, he does not take such decisions lightly; but, because he is independent, he takes them, and his advice is respected as that of an independent person.

If we take that away — if we reduce pilots to a position in which they are under someone else's authority — we shall break what my hon. Friend described as a trust which has been built up over many years, and which I value very highly. The master pays a great compliment when he says to a pilot, "Right, it's all yours," and leaves him to it. That will change if the master knows that, in future, pressures will be imposed that may affect the pilot's judgment. I do not believe that any of my colleagues will allow the new regime to affect their judgment, but the chances are that some people may think otherwise.

Mr. Wallace: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman is saying. However, I am sure that he will accept that, for 10 years or more, pilots have operated in Sullom Voe — which is a very difficult channel in which to manoeuvre — with the greatest safety, and with safety considerations still paramount. The pressures to which the hon. Gentleman rightly referred have not detracted from their high safety standards.

Mr. Thornton: I do not suggest for a moment that the pilots who are employed will suddenly cease to be competent, experienced, dedicated professionals, as they are today, or that they will cease to exercise as far as possible their judgment and independence. If, however, somebody says to them, "You will", or, "You must", that is a change of status that hon. Members must accept. The sea around our coasts is an ever-present danger. The recent ferry disaster reminded us of that. We must do nothing to reduce the safety measures that apply to our ships and the effectiveness with which they are piloted through our coastal waters. Pilots recognise the need for change. In broad terms, they have fought against some of the Bill's provisions, but they concede that this is the way the Government wish to go. Therefore, they do not oppose the basic principles of the Bill.

Nevertheless, the House has a duty to ensure two objectives to which the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) referred. I was interested to hear about his experience as a quartermaster. I hope that he did not listen too often to the siren voices to which he referred. Who knows? At some stage we might have been colleagues on a ship's bridge. He referred to two important objectives that must be ensured by this legislation. First, it must provide a long-term legislative framework for pilotage that will ensure safe navigation in our coastal waters. Secondly, there must be fair and equitable treatment for all pilots.

As for the first objective, I have already mentioned the commercial pressures on the employee. But commercial pressure does not apply only to pilots. According to the Bill, commercial pressures will be applied to the masters of ships, whose owners may wish them to obtain exemption certificates. Hon. Members have referred to the open-ended nature of pilotage exemption certificates. I sat on a committee that examined masters and mates who sought exemption certificates. The vast majority of those who came before the committee were granted exemption certificates. My colleagues and I were there to ensure that they were competent to handle their ships and that they were also competent to be let loose on the river, with all the other users.

I am seeking not a semantic but a material change to clause 8, which says:

"a competent harbour authority . . . shall . . . grant a certificate"

to any person who applies for such a certificate, provided that he meets certain qualifications. I welcome the amendment that was included in the other place regarding the use of the English language. Stories of pilots trying to communicate on foreign ships where English is neither spoken nor understood are legion. I shall not detain or try to amuse the House with those stories. It was an important amendment. However, in clause 8 the word "shall" must be altered to "may". If the competent harbour authorities are to exercise their responsibilities, they must be able to say no. As drafted, the Bill says that they shall grant a certificate. They are left with no room for manouevre.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Before my hon. Friend leaves that very important point, how does this mandatory provision affect a port that has sand banks at its entrance which change after every major storm? If it is mandatory to grant an exemption certificate, how is a master who has not been in an area for nine months to know the present configuration of the entrance to a harbour such as Teignmouth in Devon?

Mr. Thornton: We look at charts before we do a job. It is as simple as that. That is what being a pilot is about. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) makes a valid point because provided that a master makes a certain number of passages into a port and is deemed to have the overall knowledge about buoys and markers under the terms of the proposed legislation the harbour authority "shall" grant permission. If the word used were "may" the point made by my hon. Friend could be taken into account. There are peculiarities. Pilotage is about local conditions. That is why we have pilots. They are experienced in local conditions. They are not general mariners but local consultants. As any consultant worth his salt knows, he keeps up with matters which affect his trade or profession.

I turn to the effect upon pilots and the need to ensure that some recognition is made of the effects that the Bill will have on men whose livelihood is being legislated away. The Government have a responsibility.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) is not able to be here tonight, but he received a letter from the Prime Minister in answer to queries raised with him by pilots. The Prime Minister told him:

"in drawing up the new proposals the Government's aim will be to deal equitably with all those involved including in particular both the pilots who will be retiring and those who will be continuing."

We must ensure that that occurs in the legislation.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State published the Bill he said that the reorganisation would

"provide a lasting basis for the future of pilotage as well as equitable treatment for the pilots themselves."

The proposed compensation scheme has been agreed and accepted by the pilots. For those who volunteer to go the scheme will be fine, but it will create tremendous problems for many who are under 50 years of age.

The opportunities for transfer to other ports have been mentioned. Negotiations are continuing. However, there is no compulsion on ports to accept transferees. The

competent harbour authority can decide on its own regime. It does not have to accept pilots who are surplus to requirements in Liverpool or anywhere else.

The arbitration clause introduced in the House of Lords is welcome, but, in my view and that of many of my former colleagues, it is not adequate to deliver the Prime Minister's assurance.

There is a misunderstanding about earnings. We are talking not about the protection of the present level of earnings but about the entitlements. We are talking about two distinct issues. Hon. Members will have seen the lists illustrating the discrepancies between ports. At some, earnings are very high indeed because those ports are undermanned. At other ports earnings are lower than the nationally agreed figure because of overmanning. We are talking about entitlements, not current earnings levels. I welcome the assurance that has been offered but I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister — I say this with the greatest respect — that ministerial assurances are not worth a great deal.

After the Bill has been debated and enacted it will be interpreted by the courts. It is those courts that will determine whether or not a competent harbour authority is entitled to do things. A ministerial assurance given on the day, even if given in good faith, will not be worth the *Hansard* paper on which it was written.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Pilotage Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Pilotage Bill *[Lords]*

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Thornton: As I said at the beginning of my speech, I am a former member of a proud profession that has a long and honourable tradition. Indeed, pilotage is referred to as the second oldest profession in the world. I do not want to see that profession disappear. I do not want its professional standards eroded by actions taken by this House. I do not believe that, ultimately, this House should hand over the responsibilities for safe navigation around our waters to anyone, however well-intentioned they may be.

Reference has always been made to the appeals procedure. Who will check the ports? If a port wants to extend its limits, the General Council for British Shipping can appeal. If a port wishes to contract its limits, who can appeal against that? I do not believe that this House should allow any competent harbour authority to reduce the pilotage districts of any port in this country unless it can satisfy the House that the proposed arrangements are proper, sensible and protect the safety of our coasts.

We shall not be opposing the principles of this Bill, but I am bound to say that we have grave reservations. We shall be pressing the Minister hard in Committee for certain amendments which we believe will improve the Bill and will do those things which the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State said are necessary to provide a long-term framework.

10.2 pm

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): I follow the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) with mixed feelings, because I acknowledge his expertise and experience. I know that he will be a severe critic of any mistakes that I make in my few remarks.

I believe that the protection of sea-going vessels should not be subject to commercial pressure. I think that is the main aim of the Bill. The need for independent pilotage is greater than ever. The reduction in the merchant fleet has already been referred to, and that means that our ports are now visited by ships carrying other flags. Many ships have gone to other flags because of the desire to cut corners on safety with reduced crews and so on. That is exemplified by reference to two vessels that have been discussed recently. When the Derbyshire sank, she was manned by British officers and 44 British crew. When the Kowloon Bridge was lost, only a few weeks ago, there was a total of only 28 Indian and Turkish nationals on board.

The hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) made reference to exemption certificates. I agree that that is not the way to proceed with regard to pilotage of our ports. The competence of foreign vessels is being questioned, and it seems that the need for independent pilotage is becoming more necessary. Vessels are under pressure to achieve a quick turn round. Many cargoes are carried in containerships, but it was not so long ago when vessels would be alongside for a few days while general cargo was winched out. There would be time for the crew to have a rest from sea-going. Things have changed. A senior captain told me quite recently that he had been obliged to be in France, Belgium and Holland within 24 hours. That is a sign of the pressures that ships are under.

There are dangers that might arise from the granting of exemption certificates. A pilot has said that on the Firth of Forth the ports are opposed to compulsory pilotage and that it is the Royal Navy that insists that pilotage on the main channel should be made compulsory. The pilotage in the area includes the main channel to Leith, and the ports and shipping agents have refused in the past to concede to the requests of pilots. That gives us some idea of what may occur in future if the Bill remains as it is.

I question what has been said about competition. I have the figures for a vessel which was in the Firth of Forth recently. The cost of pilotage is a small percentage of the total costs that were incurred. Harbour dues amounted to over 35 per cent. of all costs, light dues were 26 per cent. and pilotage costs amounted to 4·5 per cent. Whatever corners are cut and whatever economies are made, the effect on the costs of ships coming in and out of our ports will be only slight.

I have been surprised by the broad agreement between the parties on the Bill. Following its introduction by the Under-Secretary of State, it was welcomed by the hon. Member for Wigan, who spoke from the Opposition Dispatch Box, and by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who spoke on behalf of the Liberal party. Reservations have been expressed, questions have been asked and caveats have been entered. But there seems to be general agreement. I cannot share in that agreement and I intend to keep a watching brief on the Bill. I hope that those who consider it in Committee will ensure that it emerges from that stage of its consideration a far better Bill than it is now.

10.8 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) referred, understandably, to his membership of a proud profession. It is because the House, Parliament and the country regard pilots with such respect that it has taken so long for the Bill to reach this stage in its consideration. Decades of debate have taken place on pilotage and it is respect for pilots, shipowners, and port operators that has resulted in a remarkably extended discussion of an incredibly complex and difficult problem.

I begin by extending praise to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, because it is remarkable that we have progressed so far. Many of us can think back over decades of discussion and debate, and there has been immense difficulty in finding a solution to a problem that did not appear to have an obvious solution. There had to be change, and my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby was good enough to say that pilots recognised that there had to be reform. He recognised that there was overmanning — that there were too many pilots — and that change had to come. However, it has been remarkably difficult to make progress, and I am sincere when I say to my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues who have brought the Bill this far that theirs is a quite considerable achievement.

The solution whereby the independence and self-employment status of pilots operating within a statutory framework of protection will become employment by a "competent harbour authority" is a fundamental change. It is not one that necessarily commands the support or enthusiasm of everybody, but it now commands the acceptance, albeit sometimes reluctant, of all the parties involved. That is a remarkable achievement, and I wish to put it on record that my hon. Friends have grasped the nettle and I am delighted that they have. I believe it to be a solution that will work. I believe it to be a principle upon which we can go forward and compete in this highly competitive world of port management.

There should be two principles involved. First, our harbour authorities must be as free as we can possibly make them and they should be given as much flexibility as we can allow them to compete against other ports throughout the world. Secondly, we should introduce into the transitional arrangements some flexibility to allow the changes to take place as helpfully as we can with the ultimate goal of total competitiveness.

The fundamental point is the revolution that has taken place in our harbour and ports operations in the past 20 years. Many of us have seen dramatic changes taking place. We would not have believed it possible that so much could have happened in that time. Many of us saw the dying days of the London enclosed docks and the old stevedoring practices. We have seen new ports emerge, new containerisation and new roll-on/roll-off ferries. We have seen a revolution in the ports.

We have seen a revolution, not always for the good, in the merchant fleets of the world. However, the reform of pilotage has eluded us so far.

The other thing that has eluded us is the reform of light dues. We are trying to improve our competitive position, to reduce the financial burden on our ports and on shipowners and to compete with the Europeans and other ports. The pilots are now making a sacrifice, as are the ports, which will carry much of the burden of the cost of this reform. The Government should look much more radically at the question of light dues, just as they are asking the pilots to look radically at their own services.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Even with the current rise, light dues are 18 per cent. lower in real terms than they were five years ago. That is exactly the opposite of pilotage charges.

Mr. Moate: My hon. Friend will recall that I used the word "radically". I was talking not about minor or even major increases or reductions in charges but about the need to compete with the rest of the world. It is because of that need that we have the Bill today and why we have to tackle the question of the large number of pilots — too many for the needs of the industry. We must look at the whole scene. That scene includes the anomaly of British ports and shipping into British ports incurring unacceptable charges.

I welcome the Bill. I believe that fundamentally we have got it right. If we can pass to harbour authorities the direct management responsibility for deciding where and when pilotage should be utilised, I believe that we shall have cut across a confused scene and produced a workable solution. As I have said, it is remarkable that we have reached this position at all. We must do the best job that we can even allowing for the fact that many parties do not support wholeheartedly what we are doing.

As the hour is getting late and as the principle has been generally accepted if not enthusiastically endorsed by all concerned, I want to consider a few of the transitional arrangements that I believe are necessary. First, I deeply regret the point made by my hon. Friend the Minister about his proposal on numbers and the fact that if a port opts for self-employment the pilots will, in effect, be able to determine the number of pilots who will ultimately be engaged. As I understand it, when the port opts for a self-employed agency, the port can determine with that new agency the number of pilots. However, I believe that my hon. Friend is saying that thereafter the harbour authority will not be able to reduce the number of authorised pilots. I can understand why my hon. Friend has given in to this pressure, but I think that he was wrong to do so. He is perpetuating an overmanning arrangement and that ultimately will be to the detriment of ports and the pilots.

In effect, my hon. Friend the Minister is stating that under the self-employment option the pilots can determine how many pilots there will be. Of course, if trade diminishes and there is a set contract price for that agency, presumably the pilots will dilute their own earnings. However, that is not necessarily for the good of the industry. In fact, some pilots might accept a dilution of their earnings and we might see an increase in the number of part-time pilots to the detriment of full-time pilots. My hon. Friend the Minister has gone against the principle and spirit of the legislation. However, the proposal may have no effect whatsoever. I suspect that most harbour authorities will decide that, in view of this new condition, they will not choose the self-employment option. That is their decision. The new Competent Harbour authorities —I use that as a title, not an adjective—will be able to choose whether they opt for employed pilots or a self-employment position. In future, if pilots can determine their own numbers, I suspect that most harbour authorities will be persuaded to choose the employment option and I believe that on balance, that would probably be a good thing.

I hope that there will be time between now and the Committee stage for the Minister to amend that proposal slightly and allow for a review in a certain number of years or at the end of each contract. My hon. Friend has not got it right at the moment.

I want to consider estuarial pilotage. My hon. Friend the Minister courteously dealt with a number of points made to him during his speech. I hope that he will reconsider estuarial pilotage before the Committee stage. Is it right that he should now reduce the pilotage area because that does not come within the harbour limits? I am referring in this context to the Thames, the Port of London and the Medway. My hon. Friend the Minister says that, if a harbour authority chooses to extend the area, it may apply to do so. It should be the other way round. We should assume that present pilotage limits which include hazardous areas outside existing harbour authorities could apply to reduce them thereafter. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that point and tell us in Committee why he believes that that is not the right way to proceed.

My next point concerns earnings, entitlements and security of employment of pilots. During the initial three-year period, pilots are entitled to help and to protection. Thereafter there should be a free market position. I understand that my hon. Friend has introduced arbitration procedures. I believe that they should be limited in time and universal in character. They should apply to all ports in exactly the same form and there should be no exceptions, but they should be limited in duration. I hope that the transfer arrangements will allow pilots who are surplus at one port to move to another, but that those arrangements will be voluntary and of limited duration. It is important that all these things should be of an interim nature.

There is one area in which no provision has been made for any appeal or arbitration procedure. I refer to compulsory pilotage. I believe that an aggrieved shipowner who feels that compulsory pilotage is being extended beyond where it applied before should have the right to appeal to the Minister and to say that he regards that as wrong. My hon. Friend the Minister assumes that all ports will operate commercially and will not unreasonably extend compulsory pilotage; but all port authorities will not necessarily be reasonable. Some may be politically motivated, some may be over-persuaded on grounds of safety, and others may be under undue influence from a majority of pilots seeking employment. I hope that before the Committee stage my hon. Friend will consider the possibility of building in interim provisions for a three-year period whereby any extension of compulsory pilotage beyond that which prevailed before this legislation should be subject to some form of recourse or appeal to the Government.

I do not want the Government to be perpetually involved in these matters. I want them out after an initial period. I think that that is the fundamental message of the legislation. At long last we have grasped the nettle and reached a solution which allows surplus pilots to go out with dignity and with fair compensation. We have also achieved a much clearer system of management so that decisions in future will be competitive and commercial. That is very much to the good. But in the interim period of adjustment to the new situation we must have transitional arrangements which are fair to the shipowners, the pilots and the ports. We are forcing pilots to move from self-employment to compulsory employment. If necessary, we should provide help with Inland Revenue arrangements. We should provide help in all these areas. If we can get the legislation through, the Government's achievement will be great and it is worth making some concessions to all who are adversely affected to achieve that far greater goal.

I conclude as I began by congratulating the Government on their achievement in bringing the legislation thus far. I believe that it can be improved in Committee. Indeed, many of the points raised in this debate have been almost Committee points. My hon. Friend the Minister should not be surprised at that. It is a tribute to him. It shows that, broadly speaking, the House has accepted the principle of the legislation and is merely seeking to improve on an otherwise very good proposition.

10.13 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I have sat through the whole debate and heard some very interesting speeches, the most informative being that of the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). I should make it clear that I am a layman anxious to voice my concern about these matters but that I am in no way an expert. I had great sympathy with the comments of the hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) about the additional burdens. He mentioned, in passing, the additional burden of light dues. I am concerned about that burden being extended by the Government to quite small fishing vessels with a lower limit of 10 m. That is a matter of considerable concern to many Scottish fishermen, especially in the more remote maritime communities.

Talking of remoteness, when the Bill was on report in the other place, in response to an intervention from Lord Kirkhill, Lord Brabazon said that the Clyde and the Forth are pretty remote from London. I shall focus my remarks on those remote waterways. The historic and dramatic changes in sea trade have damaged the Clyde more than any other waterway in the United Kingdom, with the possible and sole exception of the Mersey. Only this morning Scottish newspapers announced the lay-offs of 1,000 men in the Govan shipyard, which has just built a superb vessel for North Sea Ferries. In my constituency, the Greenock container terminal faces severe problems. I hope that the Secretary of State for Transport will grant me an interview to discuss that container terminal.

I was pleased to hear of the sensible and constructive response to the Bill from Trinity House. On first reading of the Bill, my immediate concern was that the men concerned, the pilots, deserve no less than fair and reasonable treatment during the changes and when they take up employment with those competent harbour authorities.

I ask the Secretary of State whether this is a cost-effective measure because I am worried that the Clyde ports authority could be saddled with additional financial burdens. Unlike the Mersey and the Port of London authority, the Clyde ports authority received no financial help whatever from the state, except for the assistance that is provided for the severance scheme for registered dock workers. That is the only help that we receive on the Clyde. Help is given to the English authorities that I have mentioned but denied to the Clyde. That is disgraceful and scandalous, especially in the light of the threadbare circumstances of the Greenock container terminal.

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

I support the observation made by the right hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) about the Minches. I was told that those waters were too navigationally difficult for stern trawlers to fish for mackerll. I do not mind seeing Russian, East German and Bulgarian ships klondyking there, but they are too big for those waters. That is evidently the case with the tankers that sail through the Minches. Such tankers should be directed out of those navigationally difficult waters to the west of the islands.

I welcome clause 5 but wonder why it specifies a temporary procedure. Pilots and harbour authorities may hold conflicting views from time to time on, for example, safety matters. Where such conflicting perceptions occur, might not some form of arbitration be necessary?

I have a minor quibble about the wording of clause 6 to which I referred when I intervened in the Minister's opening remarks. I suggested that there was a typographical error in the explanatory memorandum to clause 6. I thought that it should refer to licensing approval and to the licensing of vessels. My minor quibble about clause 6 relates to the fact that two words are used, "ships" and "boats". Why not use the generic term "vessel" which might avoid some difficulties with clause 6?

My chief anxiety relates to the provision for granting exemption certificates. Will the competence of an applicant for such a certificate be judged by national criteria as well as his or her grasp of local knowledge? Will there be written examinations? How will the command of English of a foreign national be tested? Will such an applicant face both written and oral examinations? Is the Minister satisfied with the proposed surveillance of those licence holders?

There is a widespread belief among British fishermen that fishing licences granted to Spanish skippers to fish in United Kingdom waters are hawked around Vigo and used illegally by other skippers. Indeed, the skippers and donors in that Spanish port have a fairly substantial kitty, which pays the fines for Spanish skippers caught fishing illegally without a licence. Hon. Members may argue that there is a world of difference between fishing licences granted under European Economic Community regulations and these exemption certificates, but we need to know about the examination of applicants and the surveillance and monitoring of the holders of such certificates.

Naturally I am most worried about the safety of vessels going into and out of Scottish ports, especially those on the Clyde and the Forth. Both the Clyde and the Forth enjoy fine reputations for safety. That is not to say that we never witness strandings.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): My hon. Friend is probably aware that last winter a gas tanker went aground in the Forth off my constituency. Does he agree that in a busy waterway like that, where many hazardous cargoes are being carried to Mossmorran, Grangemouth or Rosyth, and where other activities include fishing and oil exploration, both mariners and people living ashore must be worried about any prospect of widespread exemptions from pilotage?

Dr. Godman: My initial reaction is that no exemption certificates should be awarded to foreign nationals for the Forth or the Clyde. I shall be accused of excessive chauvinism, but in these waterways we not only have vessels carrying liquid nitrogen gas and chemicals to and from Mossmorran, but nuclear submarines. They are a familiar sight to my constituents. That is why I intervened earlier about the present stringent pilotage regulations for tankers which sail to and from a petro-chemical complex on the north shore of the Clyde. They must pass close to Holy Loch, hence the stringent regulation that no vessel over 500 tonnes can pass along that channel without a pilot.

My initial reaction is that the competent harbour authority, which for the Forth must be the Forth ports authority, must be severely critical in defining who is sufficiently competent to earn a certificate of exemption. As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, there are potential dangers in the two waterways.

The management of safe pilotage measures must be of the highest order. Management skills exist. We have the finest pilots in Europe. Where will new entrants be found during the next decade? It is with those criticisms that I respond to the Bill.

Pilotage Bill *[Lords]*

10.35 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): The Bill is important for my constituency. As hon. Members know, Southampton docks have been in a state of flux for some years, and, as a result, pilots at the Southampton and Isle of Wight pilot service have suffered. In 1981, there were no shipping movements in the port of Southampton, and, of course, it seriously eroded pilots' incomes. Pilots have been extremely worried since the release of the Green Paper. I pay tribute to them. They operate in all weathers and have an admirable safety record. They are truly professional men.

The port of Southampton handles some of the largest bulk carriers and container ships afloat. It contains the vast Fawley oil refinery. Tankers of up to 500,000 tonnes visit the port. In Marchwood, on the other side of the Solent, there is the Army high explosives depot. A tremendous amount of dangerous cargo moves up and down the Solent every day. Isle of Wight pilots have performed an invaluable service. On 27 March they wrote to me, stating

"The self-employed regime of Pilots licensed by Trinity House has produced a service upon which it will be hard to improve".

That will be so. Of course the pilots are concerned that all work in future should be safe, expeditious and as efficient as it is now. They plead that, although they are to become employees of Associated British Ports, safety should not be compromised or inefficiency creep into the service. They are proud enough, even though they are to become employed, to give the same service for which the port is renowned. They make the point that:

"The present Service is seriously undermanned, and an early priority must be to re-assess the pilotage requirement in the area, and to appoint the proper number of Pilots"—

that will be up to Associated British Ports—

"to provide for the need."

The pilots also make the point that:

"the numbers of Pilots licensed nationally is too high, and Pilots locally welcome the scheme to provide for early retirement."

The pilots also state:

"It is believed, however, that the plan should be available to Pilots in this District despite the undermanned situation, and that the vacancies so created should be filled by appropriate transferees from other areas."

The first consideration must be that there is ease of transfer between the various areas of the United Kingdom, they are especially worried about the conditions after the appointed day and about the funding of the pilots' pension fund.

I have often talked to the pilots and I know that they have taken this as an inevitable change. They have not welcomed it, and I do not want anyone to assume that they have, but they realise that the time for change has come and they hope to produce a service that will meet all future needs. They are fully aware that there will be dispute procedures, and I think that this will be one of the great talking points, not only for the British Ports Association but between Associated British Ports and the pilots themselves. The pilots make the point that they still wish to give exactly the same service that has been enjoyed by shipowners in the past.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) implied that there could be commercial impact on pilots to do foolhardy things. He did not say that, but that was what he meant. I give him the analogy of a pilot employed, perhaps by British Airways, of which I have some little knowledge. At no time is there any way in which a firm such as British Airways could possibly influence the decision of the captain of an aircraft by saying that is was commercially vital to get into an airport at a certain time and to get out again regardless of the conditions. What my hon. Friend implied was probably a little bit of a red herring.

I cannot see a substantial employer such as Associated British Ports risking safety in any way at any time by making a draconian statement to a pilot that he must complete his mission "or by goodness, there will be trouble." It is up to the responsible port authorities to make it perfectly clear that at no time will there be commercial impact of any sort to make a pilot do anything other than what he thinks is professionally right.

Obviously, in the reorganisation surplus pilots would be permitted to retire early on favourable terms. When we were discussing this in a Back Bench Committee I said that I feared the three-year limit. I was awfully worried that in a port such as Southampton there could be a certain amount of redundancy because it lost contracts for the container port or because for a while, there would not, for many reasons, be so much shipping in the port.

The pilots who would take redundancy have nothing to fear. Those who say at the end of the three years that they will stay on may give rise to overmanning, and there could be pressure to release a certain number of pilots. That must be carefully looked at. An Opposition Member made the point that pilots must be treated fairly. That is right and must be emphasised in practically every line of the Bill. We must not destroy the morale of people who have give such excellent service to Britain.

One of the big problems that I am sure the Minister has already noted is the arbitration procedure. This has only just been brought into the Bill in another place. I know that already the British Ports Association and Associated British Ports have difficulties about the manning of an arbitration committee. I shall not weary the House with details, because at the beginning of the debate some hon. Members spoke for far too long. That is my personal opinion. I shall not worry my hon. Friend the Minister with the details at this time of the night. However, I can produce chapter and verse on their initial jockeying for position to man the arbritration committees. I am especially concerned that we have been talking about compolsory pilotage. It is important that masters of ships who can navigate safely without pilots and who have a proven record, local knowledge and a good understanding of English and of all the difficulties in the area should be allowed to undertake that navigation. That will in some way cut charges. The operations director of Townsend Thoresen says in a letter to me that there should be

"a Right of Appeal against the extension of Compulsory Pilotage, and the provision to make a charge for the privilege of employing Masters who hold Pilotage Certificates."

That is a view from the other side, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will take it into account. The operations director makes a point which is important for my area. The competent harbour authority is not just one person. He says that the Solent probably contains

[Mr. James Hill]

"five CHAs and also, (almost uniquely) a Queen's Harbour Master".

The areas of responsibility could overlap. He says that there is already a plan in Southampton to extend the area of compulsory pilotage. A right of appeal must be written into the Bill in a way that will at least satisfy shipowners.

The debate has been of high standard because all hon. Members know their constituencies and their problems. I do not like self-employed men being made employees. It goes against my instinct and my Conservative personality. Nevertheless, if it is the only way, because circumstances are such that we must take a turning in the road—or in the waterways or the Solent—we must make a first-class job of it. Some of the points raised in the debate will have to be considered in great detail in Committee.

10.47 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) on the quality of contributions in the debate. I was immensely impressed by the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) and of the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), who spoke from real knowledge of the sea. My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) spoke movingly from his knowledge and about his father's experience as a pilot. The debate has been helped by the contributions of hon. Members speaking from personal experience and from the knowledge that they have gained from pilots and others in the shipping and ports industry.

The small city of Canterbury is responsible for an even smaller place—Whitstable harbour. A number of pilots who operate from the Folkestone base live in my constituency. Over the years they have come to see me about the problems caused by the change in the use of pilots and in the areas of compulsory pilotage. This matter has been on the boil for quite a few years.

The phrase "taking on the pilot" is a great phrase in our language. It means many things, but it comes from what we are talking about in this debate. The phrase "dropping the pilot" is equally historic and is reminiscent of so much. I should hate to think that the Bill may be more about dropping the pilot than taking on the pilot. We still need to take on the pilot. I am not against the granting of exemption certificates when a master knows the water as well as a pilot knows it. The competent harbour authority must ensure that there is no reduction in safety as a result of the granting of such certificates, and it is equally important that changes to compulsory pilot areas do not affect safety.

Near my constituency is a stretch of water known as the London estuary, which runs into the Channel and the North sea. It is one of the busiest waterways round our coasts and the ships using it carry hazardous cargoes to chemical installations, oil refineries on the Thames, and so on.

The proposals on compulsory pilotage limits have prompted pilots to write to me and to come to see me about their anxieties. No longer are they saying only, "Please don't change anything just because there are more of us than are needed with the decline in the amount of shipping." I have been impressed by their arguments on safety and pilotage limits in the London estuary area, which is the only area about which I am competent to speak. The waters in that area are hazardous, and the Bill seems to place them outside the limits for compulsory pilotage. That is the only aspect that gives me pause. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover and Deal (Mr. Rees) mentioned the ominous words "The Goodwins", and it seems strange that hazardous areas should be outside the compulsory pilotage limits.

The Trinity buoy area is particularly hazardous. The London district pilots have sent us a document describing the waters in that area. They say that it is

"an area of notorious instability, subject to sand waves. It is the entry point for all deep laden tankers, LASH ships and container ships into the port of London and the Medway. If these ships are to make the passage on one tide, then they must pass over this area at low water. This means that an underkeel clearance of 1·2 metres is the minimum tolerance, and even this is not always available."

It is particularly hazardous to have ships judging the depth of water, with little more than a metre's clearance, when they may be carrying dangerous loads into the port of London.

Clause 1 enables the Secretary of State to permit a competent harbour authority to change compulsory pilotage limits in the interests of efficiency and safety. He may make an order and Parliament must give its approval. That is a heavy-handed method. Surely it would be safer to do it the other way round. The London district pilots say that the arrangement should be reversed in the interests of safe navigation so that the present pilotage limits, which cover dangerous waters, remain unless the Secretary of State makes an order to the contrary. That seems a safer approach. Pilots are saying to me not "Safeguard our jobs", but "Safeguard our shipping". It is in the interests of safety that I speak briefly tonight.

When the Select Committee on Transport examined the specific problem of the London estuary in its Fifth Report in Session 1984-85, it saw the dangers, and made a clear recommendation that the existing pilotage limits in the London area should be maintained. The Select Committee stated:

"We therefore recommend that initially harbour authorities should take over responsibility for pilotage districts as they presently exist".

That seems to me a clear and strong recommendation to Parliament.

I feel that the Bill may leave maritime safety to chance in the London estuary unless we examine the matter again, and I hope that we can do so in Committee. I think that it would be wrong to allow the Bill to go through as it stands.

10.55 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) drew our attention to the problems in the Humber. I represent the pilots operating on the Humber who live in my constituency, and I am proud to declare an interest: I am a vice-president of the Trent pilots association, an office that I am proud to hold and that has brought me into contact with pilots on the Trent, the Humber and the Ouse over a number of years.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry, I have had the opportunity—thanks to the advice and guidance of pilots who are my constituents—of spending a full day on the Humber, going from the pilots' headquarters at Spurn out into the estuary, where I saw

the shipping position for myself. It is like Piccadilly circus there. I have never seen so many of the world's most enormous ships as were converging on that estuary.

The point has been made in this debate that perhaps we should be careful about the extent to which we allow exemptions. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), who rightly drew attention to the question of safety. That, of course, must be paramount in our consideration of the Bill. Although he did not deal with the problem, my hon. Friend the Minister will recall the crashing of the tanker into Immingham docks, which produced chaos and underlined the need for the best-qualified pilots to guide ships in that most dangerous estuary on the Humber.

I have nothing but the highest regard for the job that the pilots do. To underline the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury, I think that I should draw the attention of the House to a comment made by Mr. Michael Barratt, a constituent of mine who has kept me suitably advised over the past two or three years with a large amount of correspondence. If I were to read out the letters that I have here, I should detain the House for at least the next hour. However, I can probably summarise Mr. Barratt's excellent observations in rather less than half an hour, or even quarter of an hour. He makes one point that underlines what my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury said: that masters, although they may be qualified to bring in a ship and may have the same skills as pilots, do not want that responsibility thrust upon them.

Mr. Moate: What?

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend questions that statement, Mr. Barratt says that, having discussed this matter with masters on the estuary, he knows they are worried that they may have certain responsibilities thrust on them.

Mr. Moate: I simply questioned my hon. Friend's generalisation. I think that he will find that there are many circumstances in which masters have resented not being able to take in vessels when they have had the necessary qualifications.

Mr. Brown: I shall quote from Mr. Barratt's letter of last year which formed part of his response to the Green Paper. He wrote:

"Although the shipowner pays the pilot's fee, it is the ship master who engages the pilot. A great many masters hope that all pilotage will be compulsory and that there will be no choice but to take a pilot."

That comment underlines the fact that masters value the important contribution that pilots make. The pilot is the person who understands the ebbs and flows of the complicated tides on the Humber, for example. No matter how well qualified the master is, he sails in all sorts of seas and to many ports throughout the world. The ships that go up the Humber come from far away. Masters simply do not have the same opportunity as pilots to learn the movements of sand banks, which occur almost daily in the Humber.

Pilots should operate in the Humber, the Trent and the Ouse. I am supported in that assertion by Associated British Ports. There is some potential for hostility between pilots and ABP, which is the competent harbour authority for the Humber. I have had discussions with Sir Keith Stuart, the chairman of ABP, and I am glad to say that he recognises the problems of the area that I represent. In the briefing that ABP has sent, it says that there are special considerations that apply in the Humber and that it has told the pilots that, in certain conditions, it is prepared to continue with a form of self-employment if that is their wish. ABP would control pilotage policy, notably policy on compulsory pilotage, pilotage certificates and charges for customers. That is only right and proper as it has to operate in a commercial environment. I am also glad that ABP recognises the need for pilots on the Humber, the lower Humber, the Ouse and the Trent. I hope that that demonstrates the strength of the submissions made by the pilots.

I support the view expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). It is right to put on record what he has done on behalf of pilots in the United Kingdom to ensure that the Bill is at least in a better form than we first expected. I regret that we could not make this overdue reform except by legislation. There are other ways, but that is water under the bridge.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say whether the Bill's Committee stage is to be taken on the Floor of the House or upstairs. Those of us who have long taken an interest in this subject would like to know whether we shall have an opportunity to table probing amendments and to have detailed consideration of the Bill upstairs or whether we shall have to make our case to all hon. Members. Thanks to the intervention and leadership of my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby, some of the matters that have caused concern have been resolved, but there are others that we shall want to press hard in Committee.

I am very glad that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport was able to announce that in Committee he will be tabling an amendment to the Bill regarding self-employment. It is a little odd that this Government, who believe so strongly in self-employment and the right to be self-employed, should be interfering with that right. I am glad to have ABP's assurance with regard to self-employment status in the Humber, the Ouse, and the Trent. It is a little strange that the Government should have adopted this attitude, but they have made up their mind, after much consultation.

We shall want to return to certain matters in Committee. I regret that it was necessary to introduce the Bill, but I shall not seek to divide the House.

11.5 pm

Mr. Stott: By leave of the House, may I say that we have had a very interesting and well informed debate on this important subject. My only regret is that it is taking place on the day of my wedding anniversary, but no doubt that is the price one pays for fame. On the evidence of this evening's debate, I feel sure that we shall fashion a better Bill in Committee.

11.6 pm

Mr. Michael Spicer: With the leave of the House, I apologise on behalf of the Government to the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) for the fact that yet again we have chosen to interfere with his marital arrangements. I recollect that two years ago to the day he was married. We were then considering the Transport Bill. On that occasion we were able to crack a bottle of champagne in his absence, but on this occasion we just wish him well.

As the hon. Gentleman said, this has been a substantial and extremely well informed debate. It is not surprising that it should have been so well informed when one

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

remembers that hon. Members on both sides of the House, representing the interests of a maritime nation, have taken part in it. There is general consensus about the need for the Bill, sad though, as some hon. Members have argued, that is. A good deal of advice on matters of detail has been offered to the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) said that in some ways it has been more like a Committee stage debate, but it has been a good test for a junior Minister and I hope that I have lived up to it.

I do not intend to weary the House with too much detail. I shall go through the points that have been raised as quickly and as concisely as possible. During my opening speech my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) referred to the English inshore traffic zone. I had hoped to refer to that point in the context of pilotage areas and I gave him a wrong answer. I should have said that the English inshore traffic zone has nothing to do with the Bill; it is part of the traffic separation scheme in the straits of Dover. I shall write to my right hon. and learned Friend about his views, even though they are not relevant to the Bill.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred both in an intervention and during his speech to the explanatory memorandum. It refers correctly to the approving or licensing of pilot boats in clause 6. The authority will approve the pilot boats it operates itself if it is satisfied that they are suitable. The authority will grant the licence if they are operated by an agent on the harbour authority's behalf.

I thank the hon. Member for Wigan for his general support for the Bill. He mentioned some important issues. He asked who was sovereign on a vessel. The relationship between the master and the pilot is clearly established in law. The master has the ultimate responsibility when the pilot has charge of the vessel. That is unaltered by the Bill.

The hon. Member and others, including my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd), and the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), concentrated on safety, particularly in relation to the manning of pilot boats. Under the Bill a competent harbour authority is required to approve and license pilot boats after satisfying itself about their suitability for use for that purpose. The Bill does not, however, rule out specific regulations and guidance from the Department of Transport under the existing provisions of merchant shipping legislation. We have recently consulted interested parties about a draft merchant shipping notice on manning levels for pilot boats. We intend to introduce proposals for the regular survey of pilot boats before the Bill is implemented.

Several hon. Members mentioned the important question of pilotage exemption certificates. The Bill states that the authority must satisfy itself. It is open to it to impose a written or oral examination, or any other procedure which it believes to be appropriate, because it must establish that it is satisfied that it grants the exemption certificate only to those who have

"skill, experience and local knowledge."

Specific questions have been asked about conditions in harbours which hon. Members obviously know intimately. The Bill insists upon the criteria of "local knowledge" and an adequate "knowledge of English".

We accept that the pilot's exemption certificate is not a means by which we can adopt a protectionist attitude to coastal shipping. However, we think that the criteria, particularly that of local knowledge, must satisfy the anxieties. It is clear that one must satisfy the port authority that one knows a harbour in detail before one can obtain an exemption certificate.

The hon. Member for Wigan and others, including my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), asked about future training. It is an important matter, but I cannot tell the House that there will be some general national body for training pilots. There is no such body at present. It will be the statutory responsibility of the port authorities to provide the number of pilots for safety purposes. I stress that the Bill is clear about the importance of safety and I shall return to that later. Given the statutory authority of the port authorities to provide adequate pilots to satisfy safety considerations, it will be their responsibility, if there is a shortage, to ensure that the necessary pilots are adequately trained to satisfy the authorities' safety requirements. I believe that it is reasonable to suppose that the training of pilots should be undertaken on a local basis because, as has been mentioned by many hon. Members, once one has got one's masters certificate the job is largely about local conditions, and one's knowledge of those conditions. Therefore, the training of pilots should be focused on whether a pilot can satisfy the need for local knowledge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) encouragingly reported that the Associated British Ports authority and the pilots in Humberside were engaged in constructive discussions about the Humber. There have been anxieties in the past, and I believe that if the two parties can establish confidence in each other on this matter it will benefit Humberside.

My hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry also asked about private wharf owners. It is a basic principle of the Bill that the responsibility for decisions cocerning local pilotage needs should rest with the harbour authorities. However, we have gone a long way towards meeting the interests of wharf owners. Under the Bill harbour authorities will be required to consult private wharf owners before introducing any compulsory pilotage. Wharf owners may also appeal to the Secretary of State against pilotage charges. We have also included a provision whereby, if private operators work within a harbour authority's area, the Secretary of State may call for information about pilotage arrangements. He may order amendments if the arrangements are judged to be unsatisfactory.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) supported the basic intention of the Bill. I express the Government's gratitude for that. However, in the process of giving his support, the hon. Gentleman asked some searching questions. He asked what steps there are to facilitate the transfer of surplus pilots in one area to other areas where there may be a demand for pilots. The Bill includes a provision to help surplus pilots to transfer to another port where there are vacancies. If there are vacancies for pilots, in the first four years a harbour authority must give priority to existing pilots in that area. Representatives of the ports and pilots have been discussing transfer arrangements so that surplus pilots will be able by agreement to transfer to other ports where there is a need for more pilots. It is a principle of the Bill that no taxpayers' money will be involved, and that is why it

is important that the ports, which will have to shoulder the burden of any transfer arrangements that are made, come to an agreement. It seems that the discussions between the ports and pilots are going well.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and others referred to costs, including my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne. There will be initial start-up costs in implementing the terms of the Bill, including the redundancy arrangements. I confirm that we shall proceed with a three-year period, which is longer than the ports hoped for originally and, I think, a reasonable compromise.

Total savings are central to the Bill because without them the Bill would lose part of its objective. The cost of pilotage in 1985 was about £48 million. As the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) said, that is not an astronomical sum when it is set against the other costs that shipping incurred, but it is one of the costs that shipping pays to come to our ports. It will be for the ports to determine the exact level of pilotage that they require, but the signs are that there should be a saving of about 15 per cent. My mathematics are not good at this time of night, but other Members will be able to calculate that savings of several millions of pounds will be achieved.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland and others are worried about a possible watering down of the Bill as a result of the amendment that will be introduced directed to the level of employment within the agencies. We shall be able to discuss this issue at greater length in Committee, but I merely reiterate that control will not leave the ports, which will set the charges and the budgets. At the end of the day they will have leverage to apply because their representatives will be able to say to those who wish to set themselves up as self-employed pilots that they will employ them directly on terms that will be subject to arbitration, but terms that they consider to be efficient, if they consider the pilots' terms to be unreasonable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) talked about the Government taking away the self-employed status of pilots and putting pressure on them to become employed. One would have to make fairly generous assumptions about the nature of the present status of the self-employment of pilots in order to be able to justify a strong attack on those grounds. Where pilots have their charges set for them, where manning levels are determined and where there is almost no possibility of private initiative gaining more earnings or creating any sort of productivity, that is an unusual—I shall say no more than that — form of self-employment. That is recognised in the terms of redundancy because that unusual status of self-employment will be taken into consideration when considering the period of employment which is what it will effectively be in terms of redundancy.

Therefore, I suggest that it is difficult to mount a strong argument on the basis that we are throwing over the concept of self-employment and imposing some new form of direct employment. Indeed, we are giving an element of flexibility to the system because there will be the capability, if both sides agree, for self-employment.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland raised some specific points about which my noble Friend the Minister responsible for shipping will write to him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne said, "We keep on hearing of places where pilots are being heavily used, but the Government will not come clean on places where there is a low usage of pilots." He may be surprised to hear that I want to give him a specific answer on that. Perhaps he will look at *Hansard* tomorrow and see that the pilots in Bristol, Liverpool and Manchester each handled, on average, about 1·3 ships per week in 1985.

The hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth) mentioned the Tees, saying that he was worried that the Tees might suffer from a lack of pilotage. There is no compulsory pilotage on the Tees at the moment. The Bill makes it possible for Tees and Hartlepool's port authority to make pilotage compulsory if it thinks that it will improve safety. The Bill does nothing more than give it the right to do that if it thinks that it would be a good idea.

The hon. Member for West Derby was concerned, as were many others, about safety matters and the winding up of the Pilotage Commission. The commission will continue to exist during the transfer period and will have a statutory responsibility to advise and suggest schemes to the Secretary of State on transfer matters. It will define what assets have a direct relationship to pilotage and ensure that schemes are suggested to the Secretary of State for the transfer. Once the transfers have been effected it will cease to exist. However, it will have that important function during the transfer period.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) has been mentioned many times during the debate for the eloquence of his speech and the measured terms in which it was made and—I was glad that this came out in the debate — the tremendous amount of work that he has done to produce what we think is a Bill that is balanced between the interests of the ports and the interests of the pilots. He was particularly concerned to retain the pre-eminence of safety. I assure him that the Government's intention is absolute on that. Indeed, the Bill is clear as to the duties and responsibilities of the port authorities on the question of safety. Should any hon. Member feel in Committee that there is any aspect of the responsibilities about safety that are not sufficiently clear, we can consider what is said. If hon. Members believe that there are problems, they should write to me well in advance of the Committee stage so that we can consider their views.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes that the Committee stage will be taken on the Floor of the House. That will allow my hon. Friend's punchy remarks to receive even greater publicity than they might have received upstairs. That may be some consolation to my hon. Friend.

I want to consider remarks made in three other speeches, which were important. They were made by my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), for Faversham (Mr. Moate) and for Southampton, Test in whose constituencies there are no more important ports.

My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham raised the question of compulsory pilotage for which he wants an appeal procedure. My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test wanted such a procedure, but for opposite reasons. Clause 7 makes it clear that any extension will be subject to extensive consultation with all the affected parties.

Mr. Hill: That is not the point.

Mr. Spicer: I know that that is not quite the point. The point is that central to the Bill is the decision that we must

[Mr. Spicer]

try to get the buck to stop somewhere. We want one body to be responsible, and that should be a local body—a port. We have given the powers to the ports within the harbour limits so that they can determine on the basis of their local knowledge and great experience what should be the proper area for compulsory pilotage. That is called "de-centralisation" and involves having a clear structure of management and decision making on those matters subject to the consultation that is central to the Bill.

I have mentioned the question of examinations, and my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test raised points about self-employment. I believe that I have answered those points. He referred to the moneys funded by the pilots' pension fund. Any worries about that may not be as great as he fears. During the early retirement period £15 million has been put aside from the reserves to cover that. I can confirm that the three-year period is now settled for transfer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury, in a passionate speech, returned to the definition of the harbour limits and the need in his view to do the reverse of what is proposed in the Bill. Of course the harbour limits now define pilotage areas. In turn, they are defined by statutory instruments and Acts of Parliament. I concede entirely that that is a matter for debate. However, the Government's argument is that the original pilotage areas were defined as early as the turn of the century. We belive that there is a case for looking at those areas with some objectivity in view of the new arrangements for navigation. No doubt we can debate that point again, although perhaps not at this hour, in Committee. Under the Bill the harbour limits define the extent of the pilotage areas, although of course it is open to the harbour to suggest to Parliament, through special procedures, an extension of the area.

I have gone into greater detail than some hon. Members might have wished, but I felt that I had to answer the detailed points that were made. No doubt we shall discuss some of these matters again in Committee. Understandably, the main anxiety has been to ensure that the Bill does not harm the safety of shipping approaching our shores, and it does not. Every Member has accepted that because of changes in shipping patterns there are, sadly, too many pilots in some parts of the country. The Bill will address that problem in as sensitive a way as we have found possible, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Committee tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, on consideration of the Criminal Justice Bill—

(1) subject to the provisions of the following paragraph, any new Clauses relating to capital punishment which may be selected by Mr. Speaker shall be considered last;

(2) if the consideration of the Bill is not completed at one sitting, such Clauses shall have precedence when the House next considers the Bill;

(3) if proceedings on such Clauses have not been concluded by Ten o'clock on that day, Mr. Speaker shall at that hour put the Question already proposed from the Chair, and shall then put forthwith any further Questions necessary to dispose of the Clause then under consideration and any selected Amendments thereto, and any Questions necessary to dispose of any other such Clauses, and selected Amendments thereto, which may then be brought up; and

(4) proceedings in pursuance of the previous paragraph, though opposed, may be decided after the expiration of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENT

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community Documents).

CONTROL OF EMISSIONS FROM DIESEL ENGINES

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7969/86 on the control of emissions from certain categories of diesel-engined road vehicles; and supports the Government in its efforts to secure environmental benefits with technically and economically realistic limits.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I propose that we take items Nos. 7 to 12 together.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

AGRICULTURE

That the draft Revised Code of Recommendations for the welfare of domestic fowls, which was laid before this House on 9th March, be approved.

That the draft Code of Recommendations for the welfare of ducks, which was laid before this House on 9th March, be approved.

That the draft Code of Recommendations for the welfare of rabbits, which was laid before this House on 9th March, be approved.

That the draft Revised Code of Recommendations for the welfare of turkeys, which was laid before this House on 9th March, be approved.

MERCHANT SHIPPING

That the draft Carriage of Passengers and their Luggage by Sea (Domestic Carriage) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 4th March, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping Act 1979 (Commencement No. 11) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 4th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

Tameside Urban Aid

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

11.36 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): On 4 March, following a most disappointing reply from the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, when I asked whether his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would meet a deputation from Tameside council to discuss the authority's claim for inclusion in the urban programme, I stated on a point of order that I intended to raise the matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity. That I now do. I am pleased to have been lucky in Mr. Speaker's ballot as, with the assistance of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), I intend to spell out the reasons why the Government should think again about giving urban aid to Tameside.

I note that the Minister who is to reply was an old sparring partner of mine when he was Minister with responsibility for Sport. I hope that he will give Tameside a sporting chance of inclusion in the urban programme and will not close his mind to the arguments. I suggest that he begins by scrapping his ministerial brief as it will almost certainly be irrelevant. The first thing to determine is whether the Department and its Ministers know where Tameside is. On 4 March the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction told my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish that he knew exactly where it was, but he must have been mistaken as just 16 days later his Department sent the official notice about rate capping to —wait for it—Thamesdown district council.

I wish to address the problems of Tameside in greater Manchester and I hope that the Minister—perhaps not today, as the brief before him doubtless relates to a different authority—will also address himself to the real problems of the area that I and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne represent. It is no leafy glen south of the Thames. The most recent analysis by the Department of the Environment of social stress in local authority areas highlighted three basic facts. First, Tameside has the highest deprivation score of all the metropolitan districts outside London which do not have inner city status. Secondly, I do not wish to underestimate the legitimate claims of other areas, but within the north-west the deprivation in Tameside is greater than in Oldham, Bolton, St. Helens, Wirral, Sefton, Wigan and Trafford, all of which have been included in the urban programme, Thirdly, of the authorities promoted to urban programme status only Preston outside the capital has a higher deprivation score than Tameside. Those are the Department's figures, yet it excludes Tameside from the programme. One must ask why.

In addition to social stress, the unemployment figures for Tameside surely qualify it for inclusion in the urban programme. Since 1979 unemployment in the north-west has increased by 210·1 per cent. whereas in Tameside it has increased by 310·1 per cent.—almost 50 per cent. higher than the regional average. The unemployment level is higher than neighbouring Oldham which benefits from inner-area status.

Even within Tameside, where problems exist across the whole borough, there is a well-defined area which shows clearly all the symptoms of inner city stress and economic and environmental decay. Within that 20 per cent. of the borough lies almost 50 per cent. of the employment and it has suffered disproportionately from job losses. Half of the industrial floor space dates from before the first world war. Fifteen per cent. of the land is underused, abandoned or derelict. Almost one in four people are out of work and in some parts almost 40 per cent. of those under 19 are unemployed. Those unfortunate unemployment statistics make the case for Tameside strong.

The basis for the 1986 urban programme review was unemployment. To qualify, authorities had to have at least 10,000 unemployed and an overall percentage rate of over 12 per cent. Tameside has 13,500 unemployed and a rate of over 13 per cent. Clearly, it qualifies on both sets of criteria. The Government have made it known that other factors were also taken into account. What were they? Both Preston and Kensington and Chelsea were included with unemployment levels below 10,000.

Unemployment will get worse with the recent announcement of 400 redundancies at the Weston-Hyde factory, further redundancies at Walls meat factory and others in and around my constituency. The figures I gave show that Tameside borough suffers above the bald unemployment figures. Eight other boroughs in the north-west, excluding Merseyside, have qualified for allocations ranging from £23·8 million to £1·5 million and averaging £5·4 million, yet Tameside has received nothing. I hope that the House realises that something has gone badly wrong.

The achievement of programme area status would have given a much-needed boost to Tameside's efforts to tackle the social, economic and environmental problems of the area, yet the Government have consistently refused to recognise its claims. I hope I have demonstrated that those claims are stronger than those of many other boroughs already benefiting from the status.

I remind the Minister that we are talking, not about a mindless council but one which is respected across the community. The recent rate demand demonstrated that point; it was an increase of 2·3 per cent. on the rate. That is below the rate of inflation and helps industry and householders. The authority prides itself on good financial management, careful spending and savings.

The case before the Minister is formidable. It is backed wholeheartedly by the Tories on the council and their leader, Councillor Bell, has written to the Secretary of State urging him to reconsider this question. The Minister has kindly agreed that my hon. Friends may share this debate. I know that they will reinforce my points. I hope that the Minister will reply point by point to the issues raised and that he will recognise that the Government were mistaken to take this action against the authority we represent.

11.44 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for allowing the opportunity of showing how strongly all three hon. Members with constituencies in the Tameside area feel about the matter. Paragraph 10 of the recommendations of the Tenth Report of the Public Accounts Committee, Session 1985-86, states:

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

"It is clearly right, particularly as judgments are involved in the process, that the classifications of local authorities, and thus their shares of UP funds, should not become permanent."

It was with that statement in mind that I sought to raise the matter afresh, once the initial decision had been made. On 25 November 1985, I was fortified by a reply from the permanent secretary to the Department of the Environment, Mr. Heiser, to me as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. Speaking about the urban programme, he said that the statistical analysis provides

"a background, a qualitative judgment on other factors which Ministers think relevant."

There was a qualitative judgment. I sought to influence that qualitative judgment when I took the matter up, first, with the Secretary of State for the Environment in the discussion that I had with him, secondly, with the Minister of State in a brief discussion, and, thirdly, with the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, to whom I mentioned it briefly. I expected that we would have had the opportunity to make further representations in the light of the so-called qualitative judgment, which I felt had not been fully discussed with hon. Members concerned with the borough of Tameside.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, Tameside is an excellent council. It is responsible. It has good officers and advisers with a high level of ability. We have a strong case. So far, we have not been able to put it properly to the Minister, so we shall seek to do so in the Adjournment debate. As my hon. Friend pointed out, Tameside has a rate of increase in unemployment that is much greater than in almost any other area. Ten years ago, it was a prosperous area. It has declined savagely. Manufacturing industry has deteriorated alarmingly. In my constituency, more than one third of firms have closed their doors, and more than one third of manufacturing jobs have gone. We have a decaying infrastructure.

Only last weekend, with a representative from the *Manchester Evening News*, I went to Mossley, Droylsden and Ashton-under-Lyne to point out the kind of dereliction that we have. There has been an increase not only in unemployment but in social stress. The Department of the Environment figures show that there is a higher deprivation score in Tameside than in many other local authority areas. I pointed out to the journalist who accompanied me that this followed a request that I made to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to visit the area and see for himself the difference between the north and the south. I showed the Portland basin, where the Government are spending far less than they are spending in London on St. Catherine's dock. We are achieving great success in improving the area. We need a recognition and understanding of what we are doing in the area and of what our problems are.

Nearly £76 million is being spent in the north-west under the urban programme. Tameside is getting zero. We maintain that the case for Tameside is overwhelming. I ask the Minister to see the area for himself. If a qualitative judgment is to be made, it can only be made on the basis of personal observation. I look for an assurance that the Minister is now beginning to understand the real problems facing Tameside.

11.48 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am delighted that my hon. Friend for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) was successful in securing this debate, but I am bitter that it is necessary for us to press this matter in the House. Neither the Minister nor his civil servants know or care where Tameside is. If they had looked at Tameside and seen its problems, I am certain that they would have included it in the list for urban aid.

I challenge the Minister to name the nine districts that make up Tameside and to tell us of any one of those districts that in his view does not have a case for urban aid. Of the local authorities that have qualified for urban aid many are a mixture of affluent areas and extremely depressed areas. All nine districts in Tameside have an urgent need for urban aid.

In the Denton part of my constituency and in other constituencies one can see one closed factory after another. Yesterday I had another phone call telling me that Lancaster Carpets is about to close and that 140 jobs are to go. The very heart of our constituencies their industrial bases, are being torn out and are disappearing week after week.

In the short time that is available to me I want to concentrate on one appalling figure because it is the one thing that ought to change the Minister's mind. In Tameside, sadly, there has been a failure to attract youngsters to stay in education. The number staying on after the age of 16 is about 37 per cent. It is about the eleventh worst stopping-on rate in the whole of England. If we look at the stopping-on rate of those who get good GCE results, five or more O-levels, we see that 25 per cent. of such youngsters do not remain in education in Tameside. That is the worst figure in the whole of England.

That is not a reflection on the quality of schools and colleges in Tameside, nor is it a criticism of Tameside's young people or their families; it is a mark of the social deprivation in Tameside—the fact that so many families feel that they cannot afford to let their youngsters, able youngsters, the ones who succeeded at school, benefit from further education in the area. Ten years' ago it might not have mattered too much because many of those youngsters would have left and got first-class apprenticeships and, through that, high-quality education. However, the factories have gone and the apprenticeships are not available, and those youngsters who do not stay at school are a great waste of resources. That figure, 25 per cent. of the most able youngsters in Tameside leaving school because of family poverty and problems within the area, is a telling one.

The Government are denying my constituents jobs. They are denying our young people the chance to stay on at school, and they are denying us urban aid and even hope. My constituents want to hear the Minister say that he will rescind this decision and restore urban aid to Tameside, but in their hearts they want this Government out, and out quickly.

11.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on drawing this Adjournment debate and on bringing to the Floor of the House this important matter for him and for his constituents.

The debate provided an excellent opportunity for the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) to express their views. I was pleased to give them some of the time that I might otherwise have used, because it enabled them to put their case. I can assure them that I certainly listened to their case and that the Government constantly listen to the cases put by many of the local authorities that were previously in receipt of urban programme grant before the beginning of this year.

It may help the House if I outline the background to the proposals that we first announced last August in the process of restructuring the urban programme. We certainly received well over 100—if I remember rightly we received almost 200 — representations from local authorities. The hon. Gentleman will know that we have had a good opportunity to study the proposals that were put to us. They will also know that on 9 December we had a constructive meeting with a delegation representing several of the local authorities. It was attended by the leader of Tameside, Councillor Oldham, and the leader of the Conservative group, Councillor Bell. It was a useful and congenial meeting. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction and I have seen the submission from the chief executive of Tameside which was sent by the right hon. Member for Aston-under-Lyne on 28 January. It contains a useful summary of Tameside's position in terms of social and economic needs. I recognise the points made on the submission tonight. It may help the House if I state our views on the arguments in the submission.

The submission makes use of an economic Z score—a composite index of deprivation with added weighting for unemployment, derived from the 1981 census. It uses this to show that Tameside is worse off than a number of authorities invited to submit inner area programmes. I do not dispute that the borough has used this score in what seems to be a very valid way. But the economic Z score is made up of four parts unemployment to one part representing all other, largely social, indicators. As the House knows, there have been significant changes in the pattern of unemployment since 1981. Unemployment is one of the key indicators on which we have the benefit of up-to-date information. We would not, therefore, consider the economic Z score to be the only totally useful indicator.

In reaching our assessment of needs, we took into account the latest available information about unemployment rates and numbers both at district level and within districts. We did not use the travel-to-work area rates because they are not directly relevant to a fine-grained programme such as the urban programme. London, for example, is divided into just two travel-to-work areas. But they are obviously more relevant for regionally based programmes such as those operated by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Manpower Services Commission.

We took into account the latest unemployment data, not simply those for October 1985, as the submission appears to show. We looked at changes in unemployment between first announcing our proposals for restructuring the urban programme last August and confirming them at the end of January. That was a factor in the addition of three authorities—Plymouth, Kirklees and The Wrekin—to the list of the 54 originally proposed at the end of 1986. We paid particular attention to the numbers of unemployed in areas within districts with high overall rates.

The submission records the point made by the delegation I met on 9 December that social and economic deprivation does not end at local authority boundaries. I accept this: life is not that simple. For that reason, in assessing deprivation we take individual enumeration districts, which cover about 150 households, to build up a picture of needs within districts and to identify deprivation black spots.

Our proposals, which were confirmed at the end of January by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, when he announced an overall increase in urban programme resources for 1987-88, do away with the cumbersome and confusing four-tier structure of partnerships, programme authorities, other designated districts and the traditional urban programme. Under the new arrangements, all urban programme authorities will draw up strategic inner area programmes containing a package of initiatives intended to meet clearly defined aims and objectives.

That restructuring of the urban programme will consolidate its success and sharpen its impact. It marks a move away from the "confetti" approach to the distribution of resources in favour of one that is tightly targeted on specific areas of need. That is the theme running through all our urban initiatives, including the urban development grant and the new urban regeneration grant, details of which will be announced shortly. Our aim is to ensure that all the various grant regimes are pulled together to form part of area-based strategies.

The Government's task is to create the right conditions for growth by tackling dereliction and preparing sites for development, encouraging private investment, reducing controls and improving housing choice. That is the only effective means of keeping and attracting business and residents in urban areas. That approach is reflected in the range of urban initiatives, not just in the spectacular examples such as London docklands. In hundreds of urban programme and urban development grant projects in our major cities, substantial private investment is generated. Since 1979 we have allocated over £3,500 million to the urban programme, urban development grant, urban development corporations and derelict land grant. This £3,500 million should lever in over £2,000 million in investment by industry and commerce which translates directly into jobs.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Will the Minister deal just with the problems of Tameside? I understand what he is doing in a general way, but the problems of Tameside concern us. We have made our case and we should like to hear what he thinks about it. We hope that he will support it in the coming year.

Mr. Tracey: I explained to the right hon. Gentleman and the House how we had assessed, in particular, the points made in the submission and Tameside's case compared with that of other authorities. We decided that there were 54 authorities—we added three others later—with a better case than Tameside. Our judgment was based on the factors that I have spelt out.

I am describing to the House the further reasons why we took that policy decision. Before we made our proposals it was becoming increasingly clear that the

[Mr. Tracey]

traditional urban programme did not fit with our policy of targeting resources and building business confidence. Too many areas were chasing necessarily limited urban programme resources. I say limited resources, but it is worth pointing out that they have grown by over 70 per cent. in real terms since 1979. The right hon. Gentleman quoted the Public Accounts Committee, but the Select Committee on the Environment, among others, made the point that excessive time and effort were being expended by local authorities and the Department of the Environment's officials in preparing and appraising bids that had little chance of success.

We decided to move to a system of inviting bids from specified authorities whose needs were greatest. Tameside did not rate among them. This is, of course, easier said than done. There is no single, definitive index by which authorities can be ranked in terms of deprivation. That has been borne out by independent research commissioned by, among others, the Association of District Councils.

Our approach was to use a combination of 1981 census data and other information—notably about unemployment—to reach a judgment about relative needs and the most effective distribution of resources.

We are well aware that Tameside, like many other areas, faces socio-economic problems; we also acknowledge the way in which the borough has made use of its urban programme resources in the past. Our decision to concentrate the resources is no reflection on Tameside's performance, and I hope that the borough will find it possible to accommodate its former projects within its main programmes.

It may be helpful to point out that, although Tameside will not be invited to submit an inner area programme for 1987-88, its eligibility for support through our other programmes will not be affected. As I mentioned to representatives of the council on 9 December, that applies particularly to derelict land grant, which is a further means by which the council can expect helpful support from the Government.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 31 March 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRIGHTON MARINE PALACE AND PIER (FINANCE, &C.) BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

EXETER CITY COUNCIL BILL *[LORDS]*

Amendments agreed to.

To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Enterprise Allowance

1. **Mr. Stern** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to review the control and vetting procedures over applications for enterprise allowance and the subsequent use of funds granted under this scheme; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): All aspects of the enterprise allowance scheme are kept under review. I am, however, satisfied that the present eligibility criteria and control and vetting procedures are appropriate. All businesses supported by the scheme are monitored twice during the year in which they receive the allowance to ensure that they continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply, which demonstrates the extent to which that popular scheme is being monitored. Does he agree that, although any monitoring must be kept under review, the success of the scheme under the present system is guaranteed?

Mr. Trippier: I certainly would be happy to give that guarantee. It is important to stress that we have changed the procedure as from 1 January this year, whereby the more effective monitoring procedure is put in place. We have also made awareness days compulsory for people who seek to apply for the EAS.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that the highest percentage of employment growth has been in the new and smaller business sector? Does that not illustrate well how important it is for schemes such as the enterprise allowance scheme to encourage people to start in business on their own?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is right. The enterprise allowance scheme has played a significant part in ensuring that the number of self-employed people is the highest for 60 years. The net increase in small businesses on a weekly basis is the highest in recorded history.

Regional Tourism (Television)

2. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the effect on regional tourism of television programmes depicting the English countryside, history and way of life.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to quantify the actual effect of television programmes on regional tourism, but many successful television productions have clearly resulted in substantial increases in the number of visitors to the areas in which they are located.

Mr. Bruinvels: Given that the BBC television series "Bergerac" has promoted jobs and tourism in Jersey, does my hon. Friend agree that many more regional companies should promote the areas in which their films are made? I refer to films such as "Connie", "Adrian Mole", and "Little Lord Fauntleroy", all of which were filmed in Leicestershire.

Mr. Trippier: Perhaps it is more appropriate for my hon. Friend to refer to "Little Lord Fauntleroy", than to "Bergerac". He is right. We should do more to encourage regional television companies to do more to increase awareness of the location of their film and television productions.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister agree that any television programme showing the conditions on railway lines between Bradford and Leeds will greatly inhibit the efforts that Bradford is making to promote tourism? Therefore, will he make urgent inquiries to find out why British Rail is reluctant to electrify the line to provide clean, fast and comfortable trains, which would help tourism, promote local industry and help us to combat unemployment?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman has something of a reputation for pushing the negative rather than the positive. I shall draw the point that he raised to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. The area that he represents—the point has been dealt with in the substantive question on the Order Paper—has benefited considerably from the production, "Last of the Summer Wine", and the hon. Gentleman well knows that.

Mr. Bevan: Will my hon. Friend please have discussions with the television companies to see how the success of "Bergerac" and of "Little Lord Fauntleroy" may be developed and increased so that they can be sold abroad, and will he contemplate the development of a series on the railways so successfully based on Birmingham and the green county in their past development?

Mr. Trippier: I shall be very happy to comply with my hon. Friend's wishes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that with about 1·5 million people working in tourism, it is one of our major areas of employment and future employment, and whereas the making of films is helpful and essential, it is only one part of that. However, there is nothing that I would like better than to see "Rob Roy" on the television screen.

Mr. Trippier: It is a long time since any of us saw "Rob Roy" on television. It had a good run for a time, but I am sure that the vast majority of people in Britain, and possibly abroad, could stand another showing of that excellent film.

Community Programme

3. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the number of places available on the community programme.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): On 27 February 1987 there were 248,216 people employed on the programme. This is an increase of 56,338 filled places, since February 1986. In 1987-88 the programme will operate at an average level over the year of about 245,000 filled places which will provide opportunities for around 300,000 entrants, about the same number as in the current year.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Paymaster General aware of the apparent capriciousness of the MSC and the place of the community programme, which means that in those areas where the programme has done well it will now be cut in order to favour those areas where it has done less well? Given that the community programme is a cost-effective scheme, would it not be worth while for the Government to increase rather than cut the number of places where the programme is doing well so that the total number of places has to increase if the Government's policy of assisting those areas that have done less well is to continue? Is the Paymaster General aware that Leeds city council has not taken up 500 places because the Government will not supplement them and, therefore, people who are unemployed in Leeds are caught between the MSC and the city council, which will not assist them in the community programme?

Mr. Clarke: We must look at the allocation of places, but we are guided by need. At the moment we are trying to concentrate on those parts of Britain where unemployment remains highest. We are also seeing how the community programme places fit alongside the new job training scheme, which will provide a better option for many of the under-25s.

Half the places in Leeds will still be taken up by the Leeds city council, but we want to see a diversity of suppliers. The overall effect in Yorkshire and Humberside is that the number of places next year will be exactly the same as this year.

I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman is now urging us to support the community programme. I am told that long ago, when he was secretary of the council of voluntary services in Bradford, he was always opposed to it. Now that the Liberal party has come round and is seeking to imitate it, no doubt he has had a change of view.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I assure my right hon. and learned Friend that many of us who represent areas with relatively low unemployment strongly support his policy of taking places from the community programme in the wealthier parts of the country and redistributing them to areas with higher unemployment. However, will he make sure that the baby is not thrown out with the bath water and that specialist schemes, such as that operated by the Elfrida Rathbone Society, catering for those who find it more difficult to obtain work, are not scrapped at the same time as other more widespread schemes?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because it is sometimes difficult for those who provide worthwhile schemes to understand why they may be cut a little to allow more places to be provided in, say, depressed inner city areas. I certainly agree that we should have a look at specialist schemes and protect those, particularly that run by the excellent society to which he referred.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Paymaster General now admit that on the figures that he has just given he has announced a cut of 10,000 places in the community programme and that the local cuts are greater than that because of the build up of some of the big national schemes, such as Branson? Will he admit that the reason is that he has found a better way to get people out of the unemployment figures, and that is called the job training scheme—work experience for benefit? Has he any plans to increase the allowance on the community programme? Will he admit that the net take-home pay on the community programme is £49 a week? If there is to be an increase, where will the money come from? Will it be from further cuts in the community programme?

Mr. Clarke: The Opposition object when we introduce new programmes, and also when we try to alter the balance between existing ones. They take an extremely negative view. The figures that I gave show that the community programme, which has just gone through a period of rapid expansion, is being maintained at about the same level as last year. However, we must look at the impact of the new job training scheme, which we hope will provide 110,000 places by September of this year, chiefly for those under 25. We must see how the community programme sits alongside that scheme, as well as altering the emphasis.

The present allowance is tied to the market rate of pay — particularly the rates paid to local government manual workers — and the figures that the hon. Lady cites are better understood when it is appreciated that they are usually for part-time work, not for a full working week.

Mr. Speaker: Mrs. Kellett-Bowman.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I called the hon. Lady to ask a question.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The amplifier is not working.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Lady wish to ask a question?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: No.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that while the community programme is essential to help the long-term unemployed, if it is used with imagination, it can also bring great benefits to local communities? In Lincoln, for example, an excellent scheme to construct a delightful walkway along the River Witham is helping both the unemployed and the community. Does the community programme not also provide encouraging results, in that the number of long-term unemployed is now on the decline?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am only sorry that his constituent, Mr. Peter Hodgkinson,

who had so much to do with that scheme, has not survived to see it being brought into effect. That is one of many examples of how giving valuable work experience to the long-term unemployed can also bring benefits to the local community. That is why we are so pleased with our achievements in crime prevention in the inner cities, the farm and countryside programme and many other worthwhile aims of Government policy.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Paymaster General how many people in inner London have been unemployed for over a year.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The amplifier is still not working.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that most of them are. Would the hon. Lady like to change her place?

Mr. Clarke: I am well known to be a soft-spoken man, but I shall raise my voice.

On 8 January 1987 the number of claimants in the boroughs that make up inner London who had been unemployed for over one year was 86,300.

Mr. Dubs: I put it to the Minister that every person who is long-term unemployed represents a human tragedy and that there is absolutely no hope for those people unless there is a change in Government policy. The waffle with which the Minister will answer my question is no response; he should be examining the long-term problems of those who have been unemployed for any length of time.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point. Each individual who has been out of work for more than 12 months usually represents a considerable personal tragedy. I am therefore glad that the number that I have given is smaller than that of 12 months ago. The unemployment rate has begun to come down, as long-term unemployment has begun to do in the country as a whole. The hon. Gentleman should not be so dismissive of the Government's economic policy and the achievement of their programmes. Last month saw the largest fall in unemployment in the country as a whole since records began.

Mr. Hickmet: Is unemployment not falling all over the country? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that in my constituency it has fallen faster than in almost any other area? Does that not demonstrate the Government's commitment to steel-closure areas and other areas of high unemployment, and the fact that Government policy towards the north in relation to regional policy is highly commendable?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question concerns London.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend emphasised to me what was being achieved in his constituency when I last visited him and his constituents. That has lessons for inner London boroughs, because it shows that if a town such as Scunthorpe — which has been badly hit by necessary changes in the steel industry—can attract new industry and generate new types of employment, the same can be achieved in inner London boroughs. Indeed, it is being achieved, where local authorities co-operate with the sensible proposals that Government Departments have put forward to strengthen the economy.

Mr. Raynsford: Given the serious unemployment problem in inner London, does the Paymaster General accept that the further loss of long-standing industrial employment in the area is a potential disaster? Is he aware that British Gas plans to move nearly 700 staff out of the research station in Fulham? Will he make urgent representations to the chairman of British Gas that he should reconsider this proposal, which will have a devastating effect on the local economy and on local employment?

Mr. Clarke: Decisions about the location of British Gas staff are for British Gas to determine. If a decision is pending that is likely to have an effect on Fulham, I trust that everybody will respond by creating conditions that will enable new employers to be attracted to Fulham to provide work there. Many major companies are moving work out of Greater London to provide it elsewhere in the regions. That is not altogether bad. London does not have a great manufacturing tradition. It is particularly strong in providing service industries and self-employment, and it is showing very substantial growth in all those areas across the whole of London.

London Visitor and Convention Bureau

5. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the amount of income that has been generated by tourism in the London Visitor and Convention Bureau area in each year since 1978.

Mr. Trippier: Tourist spending in the London area increased from £1·8 billion in 1978 to over £3·9 billion in 1985. That is a rise of over 14 per cent. in real terms. A table giving full information has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Alexander: I thank my hon. Friend for his interesting reply. Does it not illustrate that there is considerable scope for getting tourists away from the golden triangle, of which London is the centre, and into areas such as historic Newark-upon-Trent and the east midlands? How would my hon. Friend propose to reverse that trend?

Mr. Trippier: The substantial increase in the section 4 grant expenditure under the Development of Tourism Act 1969 that was announced last year by the Government was principally to encourage the dispersal of tourists, particularly from the London area, into the regions. A very good example of that is the major tourist development that has been supported by the Government in the constituency adjoining that of my hon. Friend, which is known as Center Parcs.

6. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Paymaster General whether he will state the figures for youth unemployment in 1979 and 1986 in the Sheffield travel-to-work area.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): In 1986 the average number of unemployed claimants aged under 18 years of age in the Sheffield travel-to-work area was 3,980. Comparable figures for 1979 are not available because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, in 1979 the average number of unemployed registrants aged under 18 years in the Sheffield travel-to-work area, as defined in 1978, was 1,790.

Mr. Duffy: Given the decline in manufacturing employment in Sheffield, the continued inequalities in the

regional economies and the fact that the Budget is dependent upon a general upturn in the national economy, is the Minister aware that those figures are unlikely to be eased except by micro measures? Will he therefore look at Sheffield's employment plan, which can create 25,000 new jobs and training places and can therefore take more than 17,000 people off the unemployment register?

Mr. Lee: I accept that Sheffield has a difficult unemployment problem. There has been a slight but welcome fall in the overall level of unemployment in Sheffield over the last six months. We have a number of measures to tackle unemployment. Two job clubs are being opened today in Sheffield. They will bring the total number of job clubs in the Sheffield and Rotherham travel-to-work area to about 16. As for the Sheffield city council's plans, they are, in our view, very expensive, and their cost would have to be borne by ratepayers and taxpayers.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my hon. Friend look at the figures and remind the House of the level of unemployment in the Sheffield area between 1974 and 1979? Will he tell us of any time when a Labour Government have brought about a reduction in unemployment? Is it not a fact that every Labour Government have gone into a general election campaign committing themselves to a reduction of unemployment and that while they have been in office every Labour Government have seen a rise in unemployment?

Mr. Lee: I believe that what my hon. Friend has said is correct.

Mr. Flannery: The Minister says that the plans of Sheffield city council are expensive. Does he not think that it is expensive for 600 more workers, who were laid off in my constituency just recently in one of the main steelworks in Sheffield, to be on the dole and to pay them money for doing nothing when all they want to do is work? What kind of plans do the Government have that are not expensive for working people?

Mr. Lee: We are proud of the fact that we are spending nationally about £3·5 billion on overall employment and training measures. We are spending a lot of money. All I am saying is that the plans of Sheffield city council would, over and above that, be particularly expensive and would be borne by ratepayers and taxpayers. That would involve further job losses and industrial closures in Sheffield.

Inner Cities

7. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Paymaster General what recent initiatives he has taken to promote employment in the inner cities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are now making very good progress in our eight inner city task force areas, with over 90 special projects and schemes already approved to encourage enterprise training and job creation for the residents of these areas. We have also concentrated more effectively the efforts and programmes of the Manpower Services Commission and other Government Departments on the same eight areas and their residents. As the various programmes are implemented, the benefits of the Government's task force approach will become steadily more apparent over the coming months to the people who live in the areas concerned.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend welcome the imaginative way in which employers and others such as the Home Office and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders are co-operating with his Department? Does that not contrast strongly with the failure of those Labour-controlled local authorities which are not co-operating with the Manpower Services Commission and the inner city task force schemes?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend about the contrast, and it is unfortunate. We are now doing very good work under the community programme in providing work experience to help people to protect themselves against crime in the inner cities. A number of major firms are interested in engaging in community programme projects in the inner cities, especially McAlpine, which has entered into agreements with us. There are still some Labour-controlled local authorities that are turning away training and work experience proposals from the Manpower Services Commission. In the task force areas we are trying to overcome the objections of people, like the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, who have tried to reject such proposals, so that residents may have the benefit of schemes which the Government want to finance in those areas.

Mr. Janner: While it is right to concentrate on the continuing misery of unemployment in the inner cities, does the Minister accept that there is also vast unemployment in outer areas? In my constituency most of the high unemployment is in areas in the outer city, such as Braunstone, New Parks, Mowmacre and Stocking Farm, where unemployment ranges between 30 and 60 per cent. What will the Paymaster General do that he has not done before to help people in those areas?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that it is not only in Leicester, but in cities such as Liverpool and Bristol, that as much deprivation is found on large estates on the edges of the cities as in inner city areas. However, the lessons that we are learning rapidly from places such as Highfields in Leicester can be extended through the urban programme and the Manpower Services Commission to other areas. We will take action as rapidly as Leicester city council and others help us to deliver the goods on the ground in the Highfields area in particular.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Has my right hon. and learned Friend seen the leading article in *The Times* regarding work, welfare and workfare? Has he noted the favourable replies given to me by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee yesterday? Will he now think again about introducing the comprehensive workfare system and giving it a fair wind?

Mr. Clarke: We have given a guarantee of training to everyone under the age of 18, so that no one under the age of 18 need be unemployed and drawing benefit. From tomorrow we are going national with the job training scheme and will be greatly expanding its availability. There will be 300,000 people going through the community programme. We are making a whole range of worthwhile activities available to people to reduce the need to remain idle. The rules remain that anyone who draws benefit in this country must demonstrate that he is available to work and is actively looking for it. While my hon. Friend knows that I still have considerable reservations about what is

known in America as "workfare", we are providing all the opportunities that people require, and we are entitled to expect people to take advantage of them where we provide them.

Mr. Litherland: Is the Minister aware that there is 46 per cent. male unemployment in the centre of Manchester in my constituency and that that figure is still rising? How can the right hon. and learned Gentleman come to the Dispatch Box with deceitful distortions of the real facts? When will we get real jobs, not cosmetics?

Mr. Clarke: I know that conditions are quite serious for many people in the middle of Manchester. That is why Moss Side is one of the places where we have an inner city task force operating. I know from my contacts with the city that quite a lot is happening there. It is a strong commercial and regional centre and the economy there seems to be reviving extremely well. The Government have done a great deal to help by financing such things as the G-Mex centre and, next door, the development at Salford Quays. Now that the national economy is reviving so strongly, I think that Manchester is one of those places where we have the greatest cause to be optimistic about the future.

Mr. Watts: What would be the effects on improving employment prospects in inner cities of a 1 per cent. tax on company turnover, as proposed by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott)?

Mr. Clarke: I am a little bewildered about where we are on the 1 per cent. levy. Recently, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) appeared to deny that he had guaranteed that a 1 per cent. tax on turnover would be charged. I had to look up the *Official Report* to confirm that the hon. Gentleman had, indeed, committed himself to such a levy. I am waiting to hear whether he will commit himself to it again. Perhaps urgent consultations are taking place in Dagenham about that matter.

Mr. Prescott: The Paymaster General will recall that last February, when he launched this scheme, he said that the task force was a bold experiment in creating real jobs. As he has not made any claim for real jobs in his statements since, can he now tell the House how many real jobs have been created by this scheme, or how many jobs he expects to create by this scheme? Is not the real truth that this is a propaganda hoax on people in the inner city areas? The right hon. and learned Gentleman is not creating real jobs. It would be much better if he gave the £20 billion that he robbed from local authorities back to them to create real jobs.

Mr. Clarke: Real jobs are being created all the time in the task force areas—in the work and training which Tarmac will provide on the Broughton road contract in Birmingham, in the training which we are providing for new jobs in the Copthorne hotel in Birmingham and in all the work which we are doing in Gloucester Grove. It is artificial to produce exact figures in response to the type of questions posed by the hon. Gentleman. I am horrified to hear that the hon. Gentleman has recommitted himself to putting money into the hands of the Left-wing local authorities. No doubt he is still committed to Southwark council's proposals for employment creation, but, when he goes to Southwark, he will find that the council's activities do a great deal of harm to employment and training in that borough and that our task force is providing some of the few signs of hope there.

Cumbria and the Northern Region

8. Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Paymaster General what effect he expects the Budget measures to have on employment in Cumbria and the northern region.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Budget will help to sustain the pace of economic growth, enterprise and employment creation throughout the United Kingdom, including Cumbria.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Paymaster General aware that in the northern region, in Cumbria, and in my constituency the general view right across the political spectrum is that, if the Government had the money to give away in the Budget, they should have spent it on supporting schemes, supporting public services and developing real jobs instead of throwing away taxpayers' money on imports? Why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman not understand that the majority of people believe that personal greed should come second to solving the problems of unemployment, especially in areas such as mine where people simply cannot find work?

Mr. Clarke: This year, because of the growth in the economy, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to combine reductions in taxation with restraints in public borrowing and increases in public expenditure, particularly on education and health. My Department has had its biggest increase in public expenditure during this Government's period in office and more than £3 billion is now spent on employment and training. I am glad to say that unemployment is falling faster in the northern region than in almost any other region. The major threat to jobs in Cumbria, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, comes from the policies of the Labour and Liberal parties on nuclear power and Trident.

Mr. Maclean: When my right hon. and learned Friend visits Cumbria on Friday, and my constituency, he will see for himself that unemployment in Cumbria is falling faster than in any other part of the United Kingdom—as a result of former Budgets. Will he reflect on the disastrous consequences for jobs in Cumbria if our main industries are closed down—I refer to Sellafield and Trident at Barrow and Furness—and if agriculture is rated for tax as the Labour and Liberal parties propose?

Mr. Clarke: I am looking forward to being in Carlisle on Friday and to visiting Penrith and the Border and seeing what is being achieved there. I can only endorse my hon. Friend's remarks. There would not only be a direct effect on jobs in Cumbria. Many northern engineering firms with contracts under the defence, or the civil nuclear programmes, are threatened by the policies of the Labour and Liberal parties.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Is the Paymaster General aware that the collapse of the engineering industry in the northern region has left many people, who have worked in that industry throughout their lives and are now aged over 50, without any prospect of ever gaining employment again in their lives? What hope will any of those schemes give to those people?

Mr. Clarke: Of course, I appreciate that parts of the north-east have been especially badly hit by the rapid

changes that have taken place in steel, shipbuilding, to some extent coal, and heavy engineering in this country. That is why I take encouragement from the way in which new jobs are being created in the region, from the rapid increase in self-employment in that part of the country, and from all the attempts that are being made through enterprise zones and inner city task forces to stimulate new investment. Jobs are being created in retailing. For example, the biggest retailing development in this country is in the north-east.

Mr. Fallon: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that about 6,000 new small businesses were set up in the northern region last year? Will he come up to the north-east and explain to my constituents the way in which the Labour party would help the unemployed by taxing them more heavily as soon as they found their first job?

Mr. Clarke: I remain bewildered by those proposals. I agree with my hon. Friend that, having passed through a difficult period, one can now find all the signs of a regeneration in industry and employment in the northern region, for which we have been waiting for some time, since we came out of the recession. I see no hope for employment in the north if we return to policies of higher taxation, borrowing and inflation, and measures such as the expensive training levy which would be imposed on the turnover of every firm in the region.

Job Training Scheme

9. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Paymaster General what response he has had from local authorities to the job training scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In general, there has been a good response from local authorities.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Paymaster General aware that some local authorities, especially Scottish local authorities, are reluctant to participate in that scheme, unless it is seen to involve real training for real jobs with realistic wage levels? Will he try to meet those objections because otherwise the job training scheme will be seen to be yet another Government trick to try to fiddle the unemployment figures by conscripting people from the dole queue into phoney jobs?

Mr. Clarke: I hope to assure local authorities and the hon. Gentleman that the training provided by the new JTS will be good quality training aimed at providing real jobs because it will involve work experience with employers. No local authorities have yet come forward to sign a contract, but many have put forward proposals, and I hope that we reach agreement with those in Scotland. I hope also that no local authorities or trade unions will be tempted into playing politics with the JTS or getting us bogged down in trade union arguments about rates of pay.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Labour party's attitude to this imaginative scheme to introduce training to a substantial number of young people in particular, is similar to the attitude that it displayed to the youth training scheme in its earlier years? Can we look forward to a similar change in its attitude?

Mr. Clarke: I very much hope so. At present the Labour party does not really know its reaction to the JTS, having condemned it automatically when it was first announced. The only comfort that I take from its latest so-called 1 million jobs package, which is comprised largely of the same old measures, is that a large part of it is a plain imitation of our JTS programme. It proposes to provide 300,000 training places, whereas it claims that the 120,000 training places for which we aim in the JTS are too many, too quickly.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Paymaster General confirm that only about 2,000 places have been achieved on the pilot schemes out of a target of about 5,000, that nearly half the people were over 25 and that there has been a high drop-out rate? If that is the case, does it justify the Government's forced expansion of the schemes?

Mr. Clarke: I do not agree with all those criticisms, but I agree that the point of pilot schemes is to see how they go and to learn from any problems we encounter. On the whole the response from trainees, agents and work experience providers was extremely good. Probably too many of those taking part were over 25 and we intend to target the scheme largely on the under-25s. I do not agree that the drop-out rate was bad. Some people leave the scheme because they find a full-time job where they can get further training and we do not object to that.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will my right hon. and learned Friend warn young people who want proper training and a job that this is apparently yet another scheme which, according to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), a Labour Government would not contemplate?

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is fond of criticising all our employment and training measures, yet it is clear from his comments that he has not even bothered to read about them or to visit them and that he does not know what he is talking about.

He does a great deal of harm to his constituents in Sparkbrook if he tries to persuade them to do nothing, to be unemployed and on the dole rather than to take advantage of the various training and other work experience measures that we are providing.

Ms. Clare Short: May I assure the Paymaster General that a Labour Government will introduce proper training programmes which develop skills in this skill-starved nation and that they will not be anything like the job training scheme? Will he confirm that he recently announced that the job training scheme is not to be designated as approved training, thus admitting that it is work experience? Does he understand that the major objection to it is that the money is too low and the benefits are not sufficient in return for the work? If local authorities propose to top up the allowance to a decent rate, will he permit that under the scheme?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Lady must understand our scepticism: the Labour party has spent the past three or four years opposing every training measure that we have introduced and now she claims that Labour's training programmes will somehow be different. The only point that seems to concern the Labour party is how much trainees should be paid. If she concentrates merely on increasing pay for trainees, that will not improve training one iota. Nor will it reflect the worth to employers of

people who are beginning to acquire skills. Therefore, we do not contemplate topping up the rate under the new scheme; we contemplate good quality training being given.

Job Creation (Training)

10. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Paymaster General what proposals he has to monitor the quality of the training element in the Government's present job creation measures.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission has detailed monitoring arrangements for all its employment programmes to ensure they are meeting their objectives.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that it is in everyone's interest to make the quality of training available to under 18-year-olds as high as possible? As the recent MSC report has suggested that up to 25 per cent. of new entrants to JTS are illiterate, instead of introducing consultants only to look at the cost-effectiveness of these schemes, is it not time to introduce consultants to look at the effectiveness of the training?

Mr. Lee: We are continually looking at the quality of our schemes. The whole emphasis is to improve the quality of our training and to reskill Britain.

Mr. Sackville: Is my hon. Friend aware of the appalling fact that Bolton council has said that it will have nothing to do with the job training schemes, for some absurd political reason? Does he agree that it is denying Bolton a valuable source of Government funds, denying education and training to the unemployed and proving once again that Labour puts politics before people?

Mr. Lee: I find the approach of Bolton and other local authorities which oppose JTS depressing and sad. It hurts young people, who desperately need to increase the quality of their training.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Minister accept that, instead of monitoring his schemes, his time would be better spent radically improving both the quality and quantity of skill training up to the level of our competitors, who spend up to 10 times as much, often financed by forms of levy, on training their people, as promised in Labour's "Plan for Training"?

Mr. Lee: The whole idea of a statutory levy for training purposes is totally unsatisfactory, and the additional cost to employers would result in further job losses.

Departmental Aid

11. **Miss Fookes** asked the Paymaster General whether he will estimate the number of projects that will receive aid from his Department in this financial year; and if he will estimate how much additional private investment this aid is likely to generate.

Mr. Trippier: My Department funds a wide variety of schemes and projects to promote employment, enterprise, tourism and training. No overall estimate of the impact of this aid on future private investment is available.

Miss Fookes: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply, but may I ask him to be more specific about tourism? How effectively is public money used in promoting tourism projects, bearing in mind how important tourism is in the west country?

Mr. Trippier: It is possible to be more specific about tourism because, under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969, private sector support is approximately eight times the support that we give, which must be one of the highest ratios in the whole of the British economy.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is currently on a visit to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Atkinson: When Murdoch and company moved to Wapping, does my right hon. Friend recollect the bad jokes that referred to the Wapping big lies. Those lies are now a reality.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate his question to Government responsibility.

Mr. Atkinson: I shall certainly be doing that. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is now an orchestrated campaign to defame the Labour party to the extent that democracy is now threatened? Will he recall the Royal Commission on the press, which has not met for some 10 years?

Mr. Biffen: It has been the prerogative of politicians through the ages to believe that they are misrepresented by the press, and I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that I believe that the difficulties of the Labour party are mainly self-inflicted.

Mr. Ashby: Has my right hon. Friend been able to ascertain whether the Leader of the Opposition spent 20 or 28 minutes with the President of the Unied States, and how much of that time—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The same rule applies to both sides. Please relate the question to Government responsibility.

Mr. Ashby: Has the British ambassador informed my right hon. Friend, and has the British ambassador been able to say, how much of that time was spent in apologising to the hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) for mistaking him for the British ambassador?

Mr. Biffen: I am in some difficulty, because I cannot believe that anybody could mistake the right hon. Member for Leeds, East——

Mr. Canavan: Unless they are senile.

Mr. Biffen: I did not catch what was intended to be a helpful sedentary interruption. I think that there will be an opportunity for the right hon. Gentleman to make clear the nature of the success that he thought he secured in North America. All I can say is that I am sure it is not my responsibility.

Q2. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the Leader of the House is well aware of the importance of the beef sector of the agriculture industry and, in particular, that Scottish beef production is of very high quality. Is he aware of the great concern over the EEC package in September, which is expected to knock £50 a head off the price of beef cattle, and does he appreciate that the farming industry is looking for an immediate and substantial devaluation of the green pound? Does he not think that, as Agriculture Ministers do not seem keen to take initiatives, when the Prime Minister returns there should be some push from the top for much-needed action?

Mr. Biffen: I understand all that the hon. Gentleman has said only too well, representing the district that I do. He knows that the United Kingdom is not sovereign in the prosecution of its agricultural policy within the European Community. He further knows that it is a very easygoing solution to suppose that all these matters can be contained within the question of the devaluation of the green pound without fully taking into account the other factors. I take note of what he said.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Will my right hon. Friend do his best to persuade the Treasury to provide more money for trips abroad—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is in order so far.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that when the Leader of the Opposition and his side-kick are away the former spends his time abusing his own country and the latter spends his time abusing the host country? Ought we not to see more of this?

Mr. Biffen: I have to be as consensual as possible on this occasion and say to my hon. Friend that on the issue of trips abroad he speaks with great authority as Chairman of one of the major departmental Select Committees. The trips abroad essayed by them bring real value to this nation and to Parliament. Whether that can be said more widely, I leave for others to judge.

Q3. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pavitt: Is the Leader of the House aware that tomorrow is the first day for the nurses' pay award, and the Prime Minister will be studying the review body's report? Will he use his influence to make sure that on this occasion, for the first time since the review body was established, the public are not deceived and the nurses cheated as they have been on each previous occasion, when the announcement has been that the Government will implement the report in full, but, by phasing it, they have ensured that they have not done so? For example, last year they gave only 75 per cent. of the review body's recommendation.

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the review bodies have played and very important part in securing the improved wages of the nursing profession over the years. I understand that in all parts of the House there will be sympathy for the view that any recommendation by the review body should be implemented as speedily and fully as is possible. Doubtless it has been the extent that that has been secured by this Government that accounts for an increase in real terms of nurses' pay of 23 per cent., in contrast with what happened under the Labour Government of 1974-79, when it fell by 21 per cent.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to scotch a rumour that is going round the Palace of Westminster today that President Reagan let the cat out of the bag, and that after our victory in the next election my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be appointing the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) as our ambassador in Washington?

Mr. Biffen: Clearly, if the purpose of the visit was to secure widespread and continuing comment, it clearly was a success in those terms.

Q5. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ashdown: Has the Leader of the House seen the compelling evidence now coming to light about the damage being done to children's education because of inadequate funding to prepare for the GCSE? Why will the Government not divert funds from education gimmicks such as city technology colleges — described today by Conservatives as being both irrelevant and likely to create ghettos — and put that money into preparing for the GCSE so that 600,000 14-year-olds are not at risk of having their future blighted?

Mr. Biffen: I think that the hon. Gentleman has a far greater role in public affairs than to be the foghorn of the *Today* newspaper. The Government are spending the £30 million in the current year on preparation for the GCSE, and next year that will rise to £115 million. Unless one is to be completely dismissive of the significance of public spending, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in hoping that the money was well spent.

Mr. Marland: Did my right hon. Friend have the opportunity last night to watch a television programme based on Labour's rule in Brent, which beyond doubt is based on intimidation and fear? Does he agree that this clearly demonstrates the uncaring face of the Labour party?

Mr. Biffen: Yes, I do, and I believe that this is a development of municipal Socialism which must be abhorrent to those who hitherto have carried the standard for Labour in our great cities, people such as Herbert Morrison. It is that development of radical Socialism that is doing more damage to the Labour party than any other single issue.

Mr. Kinnock: While I am not being dismissive of the money used by the Government for the GCSE, may I ask whether the right hon. Gentleman is aware that every teacher concerned in secondary education, and certainly all the parents who comment, agree with the NAS-UWT that the amount allocated is too little and too late? Is his attitude not typical of a Government who underfund this important examination reform, a Government the members of whom do not send their own children into state education?

Mr. Biffen: I can cheerfully share the experience of state education with the right hon. Gentleman. To answer the

wider issue, I accept, of course, that many in the teaching profession, and especially the leaders of teachers' trade unions, argue that the sums are inadequate. I do not think that that would necessarily come as a total surprise. But on any judgment of the prudent handling of public finances what is being made available is a very reasonable sum which I believe, if properly used, can help in the implementation of the examination.

Mr. Kinnock: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us, therefore, why it is that when next year double the number of youngsters will be undertaking the GCSE examinations the Government are to reduce the funding for that specific purpose by half?

Mr. Biffen: I have just given the right hon. Gentleman the figure of £115 million for next year.

Mr. Nicholls: In considering whether there is anything in the Opposition leader's attitude to foreign affairs that might usefully be recommended to our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, does my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows what I am going to say about the Minister's responsibilities.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend reject the Opposition Leader's reported comment——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate his question to matters of the Government's responsibility.

Mr. Nicholls: When my right hon. Friend comes to discuss these matters with the Prime Minister, does he think that it would be a useful attitude for her to adopt in her conduct of foreign affairs to respond to a White House press spokesman by saying, "No, I bloody don't"? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is unworthy of the hon. Gentleman. He must not use unparliamentary language by attributing it to someone else.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend not agree that that sort of petulant vulgarity—*[Interruption.]*—should be rejected?

Mr. Biffen: I did not hear that.

Q6. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 31 March 1987.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pendry: Pursuant to the reply given by the Prime Minister to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) last week on the question of Caspar Weinberger's statement to Congress about the modernisation of NATO's first-use nuclear weapons, why is it, if it was set out clearly at the Montebello meeting in 1983, that there was no reference to it in the 1984 Defence Estimates? Could it be that Caspar Weinberger was lying to Congress, or is it more likely that the Prime Minister and her Ministers have been miserly with the truth to the House of Commons and the British people?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says and tell him at once that I am in no position to comment authoritatively on what he says. What he says is a sufficiently grave allegation and I prefer to leave it to those who are able to answer so to do.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend meets the Prime Minister, will he bring to her attention a radio programme that took place on Saturday morning last in Scotland in which the discussion was about the Government's policy on nuclear weapons and negotiations, and the Labour party's policy in the same areas, when 90 per cent. of the calls coming in from all over Scotland were supportive of the Government and 10 per cent. were supportive of the Labour party, which seems to be a reasonable picture of what is happening throughout the country?

Mr. Biffen: I was unaware of the programme, but I am not in the least surprised that it should reveal the balance of preference indicated by my hon. Friend. I will, of course, refer it to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who has made it clear to the nation that it is possible to be strongly in favour of balanced nuclear disarmament and still maintain an interest in national security, with the nuclear component that that requires.

Q7. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rooker: In view of the undoubted damage done to the British economy, particularly over the past 20 years, in the uncertain period before general elections, does the Leader of the House not think that it would be a good idea to move to fixed-term Parliaments?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that the uncertainty and damage derive so much from the presence or absence of fixed-term Parliaments as from the uncertainty about who might win the election.

Mr. Baldry: Will my right hon. Friend draw the Prime Minister's attention to the business section of last week's *Sunday Times* on her return, which, in a special five-page supplement, proved beyond peradventure that order books are at their best level for 10 years, that business prospects are at their best levels for 20 years, that exports, investments and manufacturing output are all rising and, as the article said, the economy is now going through its best transformation at any time since the industrial revolution?

Mr. Biffen: I think that my hon. Friend alights upon one more piece of anecdotal evidence that reinforces the statistical indications that we now have a substantially expanding economy, which is at last resulting in a fall in unemployment. Nothing can be more discomforting to Opposition Members, not least the shadow Employment spokesman, to realise that we are now seeing a national recovery in output that is affecting unemployment.

Mr. Pavitt: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take it in the usual place.

Turks and Caicos Islands

3.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Last July I informed the House of the decision to amend the constitution, and to suspend ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos. This was an interim measure pending the outcome of a review of the islands' constitution.

A constitutional commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir Roy Marshall. It consulted widely both in the territory and in the English-speaking Caribbean. We are grateful for the dedicated and painstaking way in which it carried out its task. We are also grateful to the leaders of Governments in the Caribbean for their wise contributions to our deliberations.

The commission's report has now been printed as a Command Paper. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and will be available in the Vote Office shortly.

Our objectives have been to ensure: that past failures are rectified and the Turks and Caicos Islands receive a constitution which provides for responsible government; that we discharge our ultimate responsibility for good administration; and that the islands' future political, social and economic development is assured.

We have accepted the commission's central recommendation that there should be a return to ministerial government. This will be underpinned by a series of new constitutional provisions and other safeguards. It reflects our commitment to, and the islanders' desire for, democratic expression and responsible administration.

These safeguards, the implementation of which will be discussed with the legislature, are: larger multi-Member constituencies to prevent patronage; more regular Legislative Council sittings; the introduction of a committee system to provide greater ministerial accountability; administrative checks — including a public service commission, ombudsman and resident auditor to ensure an independent civil service and better financial discipline.

In addition, we propose to strengthen the commission's proposals in a number of ways. We agree with the commission's recommendations for a five-year disqualification period for convicted persons, but think that that may be too complex. We therefore propose a simpler alternative, which would apply to anyone convicted of a criminal offence carrying a sentence of 12 months or more by a court of law in any country.

We also propose that, after full consultation with the Chief Minister, the Governor should in future be able to decide whether certain ministerial responsibilities should be allocated to elected members of the Executive Council. Similarly, after consultation with the Chief Minister, he will be able to withdraw a responsibility from a Minister if he believes that that is necessary.

The commission was also concerned about the limitations of the present jury system. We agree that the right to trial by jury should be retained, while providing defendants with a right to opt for trial by judge alone. We propose that the majority of jurors in any particular case should not be drawn from the island of origin or residence of the accused. The judicial system will also be strengthened by the appointment of a resident chief justice.

It will take time to prepare the necessary constitutional amendments and establish the supporting electoral and administrative measures. New elections will therefore be held in April or May 1988, when they are due under the present constitution. Until that time the territory will continue to be administered by the present interim Government.

We are giving priority to the commission's recommendation for a national development plan, co-ordinated under a central planning unit. We shall ensure that capital aid is used effectively.

The constitutional commission made it clear that patronage and malpractice had existed under recent Governments in the Turks and Caicos Islands. We are now providing the framework for fair and effective administration and the proper use of taxpayers' money. We expect the new measures to receive the support of the islanders, who were extensively consulted. We are confident that they will welcome the return of representative and responsible government.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): We are grateful to the Minister for making an oral statement on this matter. I wish to add the congratulations of the Opposition to Sir Roy Marshall and his colleagues on the painstaking work that they have done.

Will the Minister confirm that the report will also be published and made available to the islanders in the Turks and Caicos Islands as quickly as possible? Does he agree that it is necessary to get this matter right, not only to get the Turks and Caicos Islands back on the road to democracy, but because there are implications for all our dependent territories and for other small island states?

The Opposition welcome the bulk of Sir Roy Marshall's recommendations, and the Government's acceptance of them — on the increased role and responsibility for the elected legislature, on the appointment of an ombudsman and resident auditor, on the arrangements for disqualifying people from election if they have committed certain offences and on larger multi-Member constituencies. On jury selection, we recognise the need for some device to help to ensure a fair trial for all who are accused on the islands; given the problems that exist on small islands, the arrangement that has been proposed is certainly worth trying.

That brings me to the Opposition's reservations. Sir Roy Marshall and his commission recommended a return to ministerial government by the end of this year. I know that that is what is desired and what has been expected by the islanders. We recognise that there has been an understandable delay in the Government's consideration of the report since it was received at the end of December, but, on behalf of the Opposition, I strongly urge the Minister and the Government to examine again the practical problems of having elections this year. If that can be achieved, it would certainly be desirable. After all, in this country we receive only a few weeks' notice of an election. Surely elections could be held on the Turks and Caicos Islands by the end of December.

Our second reservation concerns the reserve powers of the Governor in relation to the appointment of Ministers — I understand that they were not among Sir Roy's recommendations. Given the recent history of the islands,

we understand why they are considered necessary, but could the Minister say in what circumstances he would envisage such powers being used? Would he accept that we strongly urge that they should not be a permanent feature of the constitution but merely a transitional measure?

If the Minister cannot give a positive response to those two points today, I hope that he will give further thought to them over the next few weeks. I hope that he and all hon. Members will agree that our aim should be to find a scheme to allow the Turks and Caicos to move towards accepting full and total responsibility for their own affairs in a democratic system as quickly as possible.

Mr. Eggar: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his very constructive comments and for the support that he has given, not only today but throughout the process of evaluation by the commission. I will certainly pass on his thanks and those of Opposition Members to the commission.

The report will be made extensively available in the islands. I hope that at least one copy will be available for each family. That comes to some 2,500 copies. As regards juries, I should remind the hon. Gentleman that the islanders will have the option of trial by judge alone. We recognise that there are practical difficulties in making up juries of members from different islands, but we think it the best way to proceed.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether it would be possible to hold the election any earlier. I can assure him that we have looked at this in considerable detail. The administrative problems of getting the necessary back-up in place in time for an election by the end of this year are insuperable. We believe that we will be in tune with the present constitution, which requires an election in April or May next year, if we announce that elections will take place then.

Turning to the hon. Gentleman's comments on the use of the Governor's reserve powers, I am sure that he does not under-estimate the extent of the problem that has existed in the Turks and Caicos Islands, but the House might like to hear a quotation from the report prepared by Mr. Blom-Cooper:

> "I cannot simulate deafness to the voices of responsible people in the Islands who complain that there is pervasive corruption in government".

Against that background, we really had to consider very carefully whether it was not appropriate for the Governor to have reserve powers of the kind that I have outlined. We believe, somewhat reluctantly, that it is essential. Of course, those powers will be used only if required, as a last resort and after consultation with the Chief Minister.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my hon. Friend agree that this announcement will, generally speaking, be very welcome in the islands? When I visited the islands, the majority opinion among the islanders was for a swift return to ministerial government. Does he accept, however, that in the light of the history of the Turks and Caicos Islands, and of small territories generally, it is necessary to build in checks and balances against the overwhelming executive power which a ministerial system confers on a Government in those islands—and even in this country?

Would my hon. Friend make it clear that he will support the administration of those islands so that a just and equitable system can be set up which will act to some extent as a check against misuse of executive power? Will he also make certain that he provides sufficient resources, not only for administration but for the economic development of the islands, so that we in this House can be proud of the job that we are doing for the Turks and Caicos islanders?

Mr. Eggar: I thank my hon. Friend for his support for our proposals. I am particularly grateful to him because I am aware of his great knowledge of the Caribbean in general and the Turks and Caicos Islands in particular. Of course, we will take steps to strengthen administration in the islands. We will be appointing a resident auditor and a resident chief justice, and will strengthen the administration in other areas as well.

As for sufficient resources, I would remind my hon. Friend that the islands receive over £5 million a year in budgetary assistance from the British taxpayer. Our major priority is to ensure that that aid is well and effectively spent.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): May I confirm from these Benches the welcome that was given earlier by the Official Opposition to the work of the constitutional commission? It has done a commendable job and has made a constructive contribution to the discussion. We agree with the proposal with minor qualifications. Certainly we agree with the proportional representation scheme that is being set up for the islands. I hope that it can be used as a pilot for other places.

The key thing, as has been said, is that we strengthen public administration, that we get politicians who will work within the new constitutional framework and that we have a new chief justice who will oversee the legal process. Will the Minister consider carefully the need to have a Caribbean judge — I agree that it has to be a high quality lawyer—but may we have an indigenous chief justice to look after the legal system? Can the Minister say whether the Government have had a chance to consider the second commission report on the North Creek development project? Will he undertake that when they get it, the Government will be prepared to publish it?

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome to the statement on the commission's report. On his point about proportional representation, before he goes too far down that road may I suggest that he studies the report rather more carefully because I do not think that the parallel that he is trying to draw is brought out by its contents? The Government will bear in mind his comments on the background of a future chief justice. The most important thing is to get the right man for the job, whatever his background. I shall, of course, take into account the other points that the right hon. Gentleman made.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Does my hon. Friend agree that this report is one of the many contributions which Sir Roy Marshall has made to the welfare of the Commonwealth and the Caribbean? Presumably the ombudsman will have the same powers as he has here—to recommend but not to enforce. Will the Governor's reserve powers cover the latter point? Will he be able to insist that the ombudsman's recommendations will be accepted?

Mr. Eggar: On the latter point, the precise procedures for the role of the ombudsman still have to be worked out with the local legislature. The point clearly is that the

[Mr. Eggar]

ombudsman will have a major and constructive role in ensuring good and effective administration within the Turks and Caicos islands. I agree entirely with my hon. Friend about the tremendous role that Sir Roy Marshall has played, not only with this commission but with his contribution to the Commonwealth.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Right at the end of his statement, the Minister mentioned that he would like a Government that was representative and responsible. Is not that an excessively patronising statement considering that in this country we are satisfied with a representative Government and do not require them to be responsible, as we have seen over the last seven years?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman's parallel was not worthy even of him. Perhaps he should refer to the Blom-Cooper report, from which I shall quote directly:

"The three Ministers"—

and he names them—

"have been found by me to be guilty of unconstitutional behaviour and of ministerial malpractices. Such conduct renders them, in my view, unfit to exercise ministerial responsibilities . . . My finds of criminality against"—

and he names two people, the Opposition leaders—

"call for more severe consequences. They are, in my view, unfit to hold public office."

That is the extent of the position in the Turks and Caicos islands.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Before going overboard about welcoming these proposals, may I ask my hon. Friend where the Turks and Caicos islands are? Secondly, will he agree that the new voting system which is being imposed on these poor islanders will not find great favour in the House?

Mr. Eggar: The Turks and Caicos islands, I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend, are in the Caribbean. I can recommend to him the Club Mediterranée, a development of one of the islands which, I believe, incorporates a health farm.

Mr. Mark Hughes (Durham): I have had the advantage of visiting the islands on a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association visit. Under the proposals, who will control the police, Customs and fire service? The Blom-Cooper report was uncertain about how the services had reacted to fire. Will the Minister accept that it is part of Her Majesty's Government's responsibility, in ensuring a real and clean democratic service, that the services of the Overseas Development Administration are available on such matters as hydrological surveys, the last one of which was in 1894? One of the major problems is the shortage of water, and that matter became politicised. Who will control the airports? They provide the route by which drugs move from southern America to Florida. Unless somebody in the House retains responsibility for preventing the drug trade, the matter will be a nonsense. The moneys involved are too great for local politicians to resist.

Mr. Eggar: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's great knowledge of events in the Turks and Caicos islands. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has listened carefully to the points that he made about the role of the ODA. I said that we would introduce a national development plan, and it will pick up many of the points that the hon. Gentleman made. It is not proposed to change that section of the constitution that deals with the position of the services. We are aiming, under the reserve powers and through other measures, through the public service commissioner and so on, to ensure that they are administered effectively.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my hon. Friend explain to the House, with the lack of ambiguity that is characteristic of the Foreign Office, the presumed advantages of the multi-Member constituency over the single-Member constituency, of which most Conservative Members warmly approve? Will the example of close consultation with those who are to be governed differently be followed in future in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Eggar: I should not like to be drawn, even by my hon. Friend, down the latter path. One must remember that the number of electors in the average single-Member constituency in the Turks and Caicos islands varies between 120 and 630. Therefore, the commission felt that there was scope for corruption on behalf of Ministers and other elected representatives which would not be countenanced, and one way of getting around that was to move towards multi-Member constituencies.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that the unfortunate experience of the Turks and Caicos islands illustrates the folly of the recent fashion of granting independence to any territory, no matter what its size, which is most certainly not in the interests of most small islands?

Mr. Eggar: I note what my hon. Friend has said. I know that he takes great interest in the matter. As I told him, we are looking at the role of dependent territories and our future policy towards them. I should not like to go any further on that matter this afternoon.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Is my hon. Friend confident that a small island with a population of around 8,000 needs the extravagant Foreign Office solution consisting of a governor, an ombudsman, a chief justice, a full ministerial Government and civil service to go with it, and an auditor-general as well? In view of the Wild West lawlessness that has prevailed on the islands for some time, would they not be better off with a good sheriff?

Mr. Eggar: If the Commission had known that my hon. Friend was volunteering, I am sure that it would have considered that option.

BILL PRESENTED

Licensing (Retail Sales)

Mr. George Gardiner, supported by Mr. Michael Colvin and Mr. John Cartwright presented a Bill to amend the definition of 'sale by retail' in section 201 of the Licensing Act 1964; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 8 May and to be printed [Bill 127.]

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

3.54 pm

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to give the police power of entry where a case of cruelty against an animal is suspected; to give the courts the power to ban people convicted of cruelty from keeping any type of animal; and to change the definition in law of captive animals to include wild animals that are unable to escape.

Britain is rightly known throughout the world as a nation of animal lovers. Nothing is more calculated to appear on our television screens or in our press than a picture with a animal and a happy ending. Our postbags groan daily with letters from constituents complaining about medical experimentation on animals and cases of animal cruelty. But beneath those facts there is something less reassuring. Behind that traditional view of Britain there is an unattractive basis. There lurks beneath the gloss an ominous set of statistics. Cruelty to animals is a growth industry.

The 1986 figures from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, to which I pay tribute for its valiant work in this area, prove beyond doubt that animal cruelty in Britain is worse than ever before. In every region of England and Wales, the RSPCA has had to deal with more complaints this year than in previous years.

In the south-east region, the cautions and convictions for animal cruelty are up by nearly three times the previous year's figures. The north-west of England, which includes my constituency, has the dubious distinction of having the second highest cruelty rating in England and Wales. Cautions and convictions are up by nearly 50 per cent. and complaints are up by nearly 30 per cent. Behind those cold, though shocking, statistics are the real sufferers — starving and neglected dogs, pets who are tortured and beaten to death, animals impaled on spears and shot at with bows and airguns.

You may say, Mr. Speaker, that those actions are surely against the law. In some cases they are, but the extraordinary fact is that sometimes they are not. Equally extraodinary is the fact that sometimes the law is not strong enough to prevent animal cruelty.

The RSPCA and other similar agencies are doing a fine job, but the law on which they have to rely to do that job —the tool of their trade, as it were—is 76 years old. The Protection of Animals Act was passed in 1911 and times have changed since then. When I read of some of the cases that I have been given by the RSPCA, I sometimes wonder whether they have changed for the better.

It is time that Parliament played a further part in trying to prevent animals from suffering. That is what my Bill does. It is not a piece of major reform; it is limited in scope and has some modest objectives. However, it is an important and valuable measure which will help organisations, such as the RSPCA and many others, in their battle. My Bill has all-party support and I make no pretence about its being modelled closely on early-day motion 706, which has been signed by 106 right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House.

The Bill will tackle three glaring anomalies in the law. First, in some cases of suspected animal cruelty agencies such as the RSPCA are powerless to pursue their investigations. Under the existing law, where there is an instance or suspected instance of animal cruelty, the police are completely dependent on the suspected person allowing the police access to the premises where the incidents may be occurring. If that suspected person declines to allow the police to come in, it is difficult for inquiries to be pursued. My Bill would simply allow the police to apply to the courts for a search warrant for such premises and then to go in to see for themselves.

Right hon. and hon. Members are always concerned at any extension of police powers, but let me assure them that in this intance all the formalities, safeguards and procedures which apply to search warrants in other criminal matters would apply equally to cases of suspected animal cruelty. The Bill would simply give the police, and through them the RSPCA and similar bodies, the power to investigate and to do their job that much more effectively.

That anomaly is not the only aspect of the law that I consider weak, and that is therefore failing to stop cases of cruelty to animals. In a recent appalling case, the rotting remains of 31 dead cats were found in a house, and many more cats had to be destroyed because of the extent of their suffering. Incredibly — despite behaviour that can only be described as unspeakable—the owners could not be banned from keeping any more cats, because the present law provides that a person must be convicted twice before he or she can be disqualified by the courts from keeping an animal.

If those 31 cats had been 31 dogs, however, such a requirement would not have applied. The first conviction for cruelty to a dog can result in a disqualification from keeping any more dogs. Where is the sense and logic in that? Why should one animal be treated differently from another? Surely, a person who has been convicted of cruelty to any animal must be prevented from repeating the offence, if that is a suitable punishment — it is a discretionary power for the courts. My Bill would rectify the present seemingly incomprehensible and inconsistent approach.

The law is also outdated when it comes to dealing with wild animals. Much publicity was given not long ago to the harrowing story of a hedgehog that was beaten to death by a young man, "just for fun". Yet that person's so-called "fun" was found by the court to be within the law, and he was acquitted of the charge.

The reason for his acquittal was quite simple: the hedgehog was not regarded as a captive animal within the meaning given to that phrase by the 1911 Act, and thus was not protected by the law. That is another example of a 76 year-old piece of legislation that is not relevant to our modern times. My Bill would widen the definition of a captive animal, and would thus bring more animals within the protection of the law.

This is the first time since I was elected to the House that I have had the good fortune to secure parliamentary time to promote a Bill. I am very pleased that my luck has coincided with the opportunity to change a law that has proved inadequate to protect animals from — in some instances — unspeakable cruelty. I feel that the day is long overdue for such a reform, and I hope that the House will show by its support for the Bill that the time has come to do something about it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Sumberg, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Alistair Burt, Mr. Jeremy Hanley, Mr. Geoffrey Lawler, Mr. Tony Favell, Sir Bernard

[Mr. David Sumberg]

Braine, Mr. Cecil Franks, Mr. Terry Lewis, Mr. Bob Litherland, Mr. Harry Greenway and Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. David Sumberg accordingly presented a Bill to give the police power of entry where a case of cruelty against an animal is suspected; to give the courts the power to ban people convicted of cruelty from keeping any type of animal; and to change the definition in law of captive animals to include wild animals that are unable to escape: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 1 May 1987 and to be printed. [Bill 128.]

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill

As amended, (in the Standing Committee), considered.

4.5 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You were good enough to have put up in the No lobby your provisional selection of amendments to the Bill. Numerous and generous as your selection has been, may I appeal to you to look favourably upon new clause 20? Much has happened since the Bill received its Second Reading, and even since it was in Committee. Those events have generated a groundswell of opinion throughout the country that the Court of Appeal should have power, in cases of gross under-sentencing, to review the sentences upwards on the application of the Crown. You would be doing the House and the country a great service, Mr. Speaker, if you allowed new clause 20 — in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) — to be debated and divided upon, although before those recent events it was debated in Committee.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If one issue above all others has attracted the attention of lawyers—judges, solicitors, barristers and all those responsible for the administration of the courts and the law—it is clause 29. As it stands, the clause provides for a quite absurd reference to the Court of Appeal to consider a matter about which it has no power to do anything. The feeling among lawyers has been so strong that it would simply not be understood if, when the Bill was on Report, the House was given no opportunity to debate the issue.

The matter arises not only in relation to new clause 20, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) referred, but, more essentially, in relation to amendment No. 60. That amendment calls for the deletion of clause 29, and is in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and myself.

Amendment No. 61, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) can speak for himself, falls into the same blatant error as new clause 20. Error or no error, it is a matter of such substantial importance to those who will have to administer the law that—in my respectful submission—it is unthinkable that the House should not be given an opportunity to consider the good sense of clause 29 and what, if anything, should be done about it. I support the application made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Let me underline what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has said, although with a different interpretation. Amendment No. 61 would give the Court of Appeal the opportunity to review sentences that were considered excessively lenient. Clause 29 has caused great concern outside the House, because there appears to have been some misunderstanding. It seems to have been thought that, when a case was reviewed, that might change the sentence given. It will not do that; it will merely establish a precedent.

The amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and me would give the opportunity to review the actual sentence, and overturn it if it were considered excessively lenient. There is concern outside the House, and I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to give further consideration to the matter and select the amendment.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) is right: there is concern among lawyers. However, there are considerably more non-lawyers than lawyers in the country, and they too are extremely concerned. They feel strongly that we should have a chance to consider whether sentences should be increased. I respectfully ask you, Mr. Speaker, to allow us to debate the matter today.

Mr. Speaker: When I made my selection this morning, I considered this matter very carefully. For the benefit of those outside Parliament, it should be said that this matter was debated exhaustively in Standing Committee. In view of the representations that have been made to me, I shall of course consider the points that have been made and will let the House know my decision.

Mr. Lawrence: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to trespass further on your time, but if clause 29 is important, barely of less importance is clause 30. It increases the sentence for firearm offences from the present maximum of 14 years to life imprisonment. It formed the subject of a number of speeches on Second Reading. If life imprisonment is to be the sentence for the mere possession of firearms, there will be no difference between the sentence for possessing the firearm and that for killing somebody. The police made strong representations that there would be an incentive to kill if somebody could face life imprisonment merely for possessing a firearm and not using it.

Mr. Speaker: I wonder whether the hon. and learned Gentleman will help me by drawing my attention to the amendment that I imagine he is saying has not been selected?

Mr. Lawrence: I tabled amendment No. 157 to leave out clause 30. I readily admit that it is a starred amendment and that it was easily within your sphere of responsibility not to call it. Nevertheless, this is an important matter, not just to me or to lawyers, but to the police, who have to rely upon the statute. The matter ought to be ventilated in this House before the Bill goes to another place. I urge you, Sir, to consider selecting this amendment when it is no longer starred, so that the House will have an opportunity to consider whether it would do more harm than good to raise the sentence for a substantially less serious offence than murder.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. and learned Gentleman is correct when he says that this is a starred amendment. I remind him that the Bill left the Standing Committee on 17 March and that he has therefore had a number of weeks in which to put down this amendment. I shall certainly consider what he has said, and if the matter is not reached today, it may be unstarred tomorrow.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to new clause 23, which stands in my name and those of my hon. Friends. It has not been selected for debate and it is to be found on page 495. New clause 23 deals with the criminal liability of persons acting under duress, necessity or coercion. The reason for putting down new clause 23 is that about a fortnight ago there was a very important decision in the House of Lords in a murder case, the case of Howe. That case has changed views as to the efficacy of the defence of duress in certain cases. The matter could not have been considered properly in Committee, because at that stage the Howe case had not been decided.

Recommendations were made by the Law Commission in 1977 about the defence of duress and other defences, which have been incorporated in the new clause. There is a good deal of uncertainty now. I respectfully ask you to consider allowing a debate on this issue, as this appears to be the only clear opportunity in the near future for the matter to be considered by the House and the Government.

Mr. Speaker: I have looked carefully at that new clause, but it is outside the scope of the Bill. Therefore, I cannot give the hon. and learned Gentleman any guarantee that I shall allow it to be debated today.

New clause 16

POWER TO PETITION FOR WINDING UP ETC. ON INFORMATION OBTAINED UNDER SECTION 2

"The words "or section 2 of the Criminal Justice Act 1987" shall be inserted—

(a) in section 440 of the Companies Act 1985, after the words "that Act";

(b) in section 8(1) of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986, after the words "the Financial Services Act 1986", in the second place where they occur; and

(c) in Article 433 of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, after the words "that Act".'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 16 amends section 440 of the Companies Act 1985 to allow public interest petitions based on information obtained under clause 2 of the Bill to be used for the winding up of a company. A little amplification is necessary.

Section 440 of the Companies Act 1985, as subsequently amended by the Financial Services Act 1986, allows public interest petitions based on Companies Act and Financial Services Act information to be used for winding up a company. The new clause further amends section 440 so as to allow public interest petitions based on information obtained from the serious fraud office to be used in the same way. The serious fraud office will not itself wind up companies. That will remain a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 16 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 25

REMANDS IN CUSTODY FOR MORE THAN EIGHT DAYS

'.—(1) The following section shall be inserted after section 128 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980—

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

"Remands in custody for more than eight days.

128A.—(1) The Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument provide that this section shall have effect—

(a) in an area specified in the order; or

(b) in proceedings of a description so specified,

in relation to any accused person ("the accused") who has attained the age of 17.

(2) A magistrates' court may remand the accused in custody for a period exceeding 8 clear days if—

(a) it has previously remanded him in custody for the same offence; and

(b) he is before the court;

but only if, after affording the parties an opportunity to make representations, it has formed a view as to the minimum period likely to elapse before the next stage in the proceedings other than a hearing relating to a further remand in custody or on bail and only for a period not exceeding—

(i) that period; or

(ii) 28 clear days,

whichever is the less.

(3) Nothing in this section affects the right of the accused to apply for bail during the period of the remand.

(4) After paragraph 9 of Schedule 1 to the Bail Act 1976 there shall be inserted—

"*Cases under section 128A of Magistrates' Courts Act 1980*

10. Where the court is considering exercising the power conferred by section 128A of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 (power to remand in custody for more than 8 clear days), it shall have regard to the total length of time which the accused would spend in custody if it were to exercise the power.".

(5) A statutory instrument containing an order under this section shall not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before Parliament and been approved by a resolution of each House.".'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 107.

Mr. Mellor: New clause 25 deals with matters that we said in Committee we would bring forward on Report. The new clause deals with remands in custody, a matter that is of considerable significance to the criminal justice system.

We shall have the opportunity to consider later the present arrangements for the granting or refusal of bail. The new clause deals with a different but important aspect: the basis on which a court should remand a defendant in custody.

At present, a person may not be on remand and in custody for more than eight days. A consultative document that was issued a few months ago by the Home Office made it clear that a number of magistrates courts hearings are purely formal and that a defendant may have to be brought a very considerable distance from prison to appear in court. Prison officers are required to escort the prisoner, often to the detriment of the prison regime. Court time is taken up by remands, during which nothing of substance can be achieved, thereby causing delay to the hearing of other cases, in which substantial progress might be made.

Consultations were therefore held on the proposal that courts should be permitted to remand for up to 28 days. We suggested that that would be a legitimate extension of the arrangements that were introduced under the 1982 Act, whereby defendants who are remanded in custody can agree that they do not wish to appear in court. Research shows that between a third and a half of those who are eligible to say that they do not wish to appear have chosen not to do so. A number of the organisations that dissented from this proposition said that the only consequence would be an extension of the period in custody that would be imposed on a number of remand prisoners.

This decision has to be taken against the background of the remand population having grown substantially in recent years—from about 4,000 in 1979 to about 8,500 today. Therefore, the new clause represents a modest step forward. We believe that it would provide an opportunity to find out, from practical experience, which of the various contending opinions that have been advanced in response to our document is correct.

The proposal is that the first remand should be for a period of eight days, but thereafter the court should be able to remand for up to 28 days in the event that it was determined that substantive progress with the case would not be possible until the expiry of a period greater than eight days. The new clause is subject to a number of safeguards. For instance, the accused will be allowed to apply for bail during the period of remand if it is suggested that circumstances have changed. No one will be kept in custody for a substantial period who has grounds to mount a bail application.

There is also a modification in the new clause to the Nottingham justices case which, as the House will recall, deals with the question when a bail application may properly be made and restricts a fresh bail application to occasions when there are fresh circumstances. That allows the court to have regard to how long an individual will spend in custody when deciding whether to consider bail once again. That is provided for in subsection (4) of new clause 25, which states:

"Where the court is considering exercising the power conferred by section 128A of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 . . . it shall have regard to the total length of time which the accused would spend in custody if it were to exercise the power."

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the Minister ensure that he is not misunderstood? Is he saying that a fresh bail application can be made when the only thing that has changed is the length of time spent by the accused in custody?

Mr. Mellor: It means that the fresh application can be made if the period spent in custody is longer than was envisaged at the outset. It would mean, I would have thought, for the most part, that a fresh application could be made at each stage of an extended period of remand in custody. To that extent, it loosens the rules. Of course, the question of the proper construction will be a matter for the courts.

The background against which we have taken the decisions lies in research carried out last year, which showed that, of an average of eight hearings that took place in the magistrates court prior to committal for trial in the cases sampled, five of the hearings were purely formal occasions and nothing of substance occurred. It is scarcely surprising when dealing with a number of major cases that it is not possible to progress speedily to committal.

The argument that has been put forward in favour of making the change rests on the clear basis that all those who play their part within the system will get on with the

job—that the prosecution will always state the earliest time when it can be ready and that the court will look critically at applications for remands and will not allow remands for extended periods to take place without good reason. It would be devastating to the system if the ability of the courts to remand for periods of up to 28 days were to become a general habit to remand for 28 days. That objection has been raised by many organisations.

In tabling the new clause, the Government are well aware of those objections and accept their force, not as something that is bound to happen, but as something that is sufficiently likely to happen that we should not proceed with an across-the-board reform without taking the opportunity to see whether in practice things work out in the way that we would wish or whether the scepticism that has been expressed about the manner in which the courts would discharge the functions can be justified.

I hope that the new clause is not controversial. The proposal sets a period within which an experiment will take place. This has happened before with regard to tape recording and time limits and is a well-trodden path. We should be able to designate a number of areas in due course and a number of offences which would be the subject of an experiment to allow remands of this kind to take place. We have in mind a number of different areas of the country drawn to reflect different court conditions and the offences would, of course, be those that were likely to be committed for trial. There would then be an experimental period and, as subsection (5) makes clear, we can only bring the proposal into force if there is an affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament. The matter will be fully considered by Parliament and if matters proceeded in a way that seemed to clear some unnecessary hearings from the court without unduly prolonging remands in custody, I feel sure the House would wish to see the proposal introduced more widely.

However, if we were to find that unnecessarily long adjournments and remands in custody were being granted without good justification, we would be able to leave the position as it is at present without any damage being done to the system. I hope that the new clause will establish that we have listened to those people whom we consulted and that we have recognised that it is in the interest of justice for the courts to be freed from unnecessary hearings. It is also in the interests of justice that people should not be locked up in prison on remand for longer than absolutely necessary. The experiment gives us a chance to find out which of those contending priorities should in the end be favoured by the full-scale change that could lie at the end of the experimental period.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I do not want to delay the House for very long because we debated the matter fully in Committee. However, the Minister will be aware that we have some reservations and he already referred to one of our main reservations, the possibility that there may be an extended remand period. For that reason, we welcome the fact that the Government are introducing this provision as an experiment to see how it works.

We expressed concern in Committee—and I restate our concern now—that some people might not be well enough represented or, in some cases may be unrepresented, and therefore have difficulty in bringing to the attention of the court the fact that their circumstances have changed. Theoretically, there should be no difficulty. Theoretically, all they need do is to inform their solicitor or inform the clerk of the court through the prison authorities. However, in a number of cases, especially those involving less articulate and less well represented defendants, there may be periods when we remand in custody people who, had the changed circumstances been put before the court, could have been released on bail. I urge the Minister, when he carries out the experiment, to ensure that that aspect is checked carefully.

We need to understand that the reason why the proposal is being introduced is not that we believe that it is right in justice—none of us would argue that—but that we are taking this action because of the pressure on the courts and the prison system. At the end of the day, that is not the best of reasons for legislating in this way.

Mr. Alex Carlile: We should all be grateful to the Minister for avoiding being too dogmatic about this matter. The pilot experiment, or experiments, will be welcome. Will the Minister assure the House that the monitoring of the experiment will be carried out carefully and independently? I urge him to consider that the magistrates courts that are asked to deal with the hearings should not be the bodies to undertake the research. If they were, I fear that the research would be somewhat subjective. I should be grateful if the Minister would tell the House what arrangements he has in mind for the research that will be necessary to discover whether the experiment works. I ask the Minister to consider whether the pilot projects might not be carried out in the same areas, and at the same time, as pilot projects, to limit the delay between arrest, committal and trial.

As the Minister knows, in Committee I expressed the view that there were other hearings in the magistrates courts with which we could dispense, particularly the formal committal proceedings which take place in most cases, although not in every case. I ask the Minister to consider not only my view but the strongly expressed private view of the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department—the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—who, I think, agreed with me in Committee, speaking not as a Minister but as an individual Member. Will the Minister consider, if these experiments are successful, a possible pilot project to deal with committal proceedings in a similar way?

4.30 pm

Mr. Maller: I am grateful to hon. Members for the manner in which they have received the new clause. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) was right to say that this decision is being taken for severely practical reasons. One cannot run a system as complicated as the criminal justice system without having severely practical considerations always in the forefront of our minds. There is nothing magic about eight days. It just happens to be the figure that was determined by previous legislation. We are anxious to be businesslike and to strike a fair balance. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) for recognising that we have here an opportunity, as they say, to suck it and see. I hope that we can explore the results in a way that will enable all of us to reach the appropriate conclusions.

That leads me to what the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery said about the manner in which this experiment will be monitored. We have not reached any settled conclusions on that. If the hon. and learned

[Mr. Meller]

Gentleman would like to write in a little more detail about what he has in mind, we would be delighted to hear from him. Obviously, we want the research process to take proper account of the views of those who will have an influence over the final shape of these matters.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery referred to formal committals, or the section 1 committals, as they were known in my prehistoric days of practising at the Bar. Inevitably, a spotlight is shone on the committal arrangements. We have reached no concluded view on the future of committal proceedings, but the hon. and learned Gentleman well knows that these are matters that fall to be examined. I dare say that, in due course, a Minister will come to the Dispatch Box to talk more about that. It is certainly not an item on our present agenda.

I should like to clarify a point where I might not have been at my most clear. It concerns the impact of proposed subsection (4), which amends section 128A of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 and what it means. We are saying in that proposed subsection that the decision to remand must take account of the time in custody. It does not of itself make the lapse of time a new factor for bail applications, but, read in conjunction with the Nottingham justices case, it will make a material difference. That case suggests that a lapse of time might in some cases count as one already. Each court's decision on what difference that makes will determine whether it will hear an application. In fairness, it places squarely before the court a major issue that must be in its mind — the length of time that a person will remain in custody as a consequence of a particular decision. I hope that that makes the position clearer.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 27

ENFORCEMENT OF COMPENSATION ORDERS

"(1) The following subsections shall be substituted for section 36(1) and (2) of the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 (suspension of compensation orders pending appeal)—

"(1) A person shall not be entitled to receive any payment due to him under a compensation order—

(a) in any case until the expiry of the period prescribed by law for the giving of notice of appeal against the decision of the court by which the order has been made; and

(b) where notice of appeal is given within the period so prescribed, until the determination of the appeal.

(2) Where a compensation order has been made against any person in respect of an offence of which he has been convicted, the order shall cease to have effect if he successfully appeals against this conviction of the offence."

(2) The following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (3) of that section—

"(4) Rules under section 144 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 may make provision regarding the way in which the magistrates' court for the time being having functions in relation to the enforcement of a compensation order is to deal with money paid in satisfaction of the order in the event that the order subsequently ceases to have effect."'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Brought up and read the First time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 110 to 112 and Government amendment No. 114.

Mr. Hogg: The purpose of new clause 27 and the amendments grouped with it is to change the procedure governing the enforcement of compensation orders. At present, the operation of compensation orders is suspended until the time during which an appeal may be made has elapsed or until any appeal which is made has been resolved. New clause 27 provides that, although payment may not be made to the victim during that period, enforcement against the offender is not specifically prohibited. We envisage that, as is the case with fines now, enforcement would not normally be pursued while the question of an appeal remained, but the unqualified total suspension pending appeal, which is unique to compensation orders, allows the defendant to avoid payment for a long time, and that is undesirable where large sums may be involved. It has been suggested that in some cases the system has been abused.

The enforcing court would hold any money collected from the offender until an appeal, or the possibility of one, had been resolved, or had elapsed. It will then be paid over to the victim, if the appeal was unsuccessful, or to the offender, if the appeal was successful.

The amendments which are grouped with the new clause are consequential and perhaps require no further amplification.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 29

REVIEW OF POSTPONEMENT OF WARRANT OF COMMITMENT

"The following section shall be inserted after section 77 of the Magistrates' Court Act 1980—

Review of postponement of issue of warrant of commitment.

77A.—(1) If on an application by a person in respect of whom issue of a warrant has been postponed under section 77(2) above it appears to a justice of the peace acting for the petty sessions area in which the warrant would have been issued that a variation of any condition on which the warrant was postponed or a remission of all or part of the sum outstanding is justified, he shall refer the application to the court.

(2) Where such an application is referred to the court, the justices' clerk shall give the applicant notice of the time and place of the hearing.

(3) Where such a notice has been given and the applicant does not appear at the time and place specified in the notice, the court may proceed with the consideration of the application in his absence.

(4) At the hearing the court shall have power, if it thinks fit, to vary the terms on which issue of the warrant was postponed or wholly or partly to remit the sum outstanding.

(5) If a warrant under section 77(2) above has been issued before the hearing of the application, the court shall have power, subject to subsection (6) below, to order—

(a) that the warrant shall cease to have effect; and

(b) that the applicant shall be released.

(6) The court may not make an order under subsection (5) above unless it is satisfied that the change of circumstances on which the applicant relies was not put before the court issuing the warrant.'.—*[Mr. Meller.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Meller: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 154 to 156 and Government amendments Nos. 149 to 153.

Mr. Meller: The new clause and the consequential amendments respond to Opposition concern expressed in Committee about the provision in clause 40 that notice shall be deemed to be served if sent by registered post or recorded delivery to a defaulter's last-known address. That concern centred on the possibility of deserving cases—for example, hospitalisation — where that provision might lead to the warrant's being issued without the court being aware of the circumstances. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) suggested then that the solution might be to allow the officer enforcing the warrant a discretion not to do so in such cases. We considered that seriously but did not feel that it was desirable to undermine the authority and finality of the order in that way because it might put the enforcing officer in an invidious position, second-guessing the court.

We have come up with an alternative, of which I hope the hon. Member for Hammersmith will approve — to follow the present arrangements for the enforcement of maintenance in the courts. This will allow the defendant to apply to the court, at any time, for the case to be reviewed in the light of circumstances arising since the court decided to issue the postponed warrant. In the cases identified by the hon. Member for Hammersmith, enforcing officers could advise defaulters of the possibility of applying for a review and could delay acting on the warrant. That is common practice already, and it could continue under what is proposed.

It is, of course, important that this new proposal should not be a pretext for deliberate abuse and delay in unmeritorious cases — hence the clear provision in amendment No. 153 that the court's original decision on the terms of postponement and any subsequent decision to activate the warrant may be reviewed only on the basis of information not before that court. It is right also that the onus should be on defaulters to notify the court of any adverse change in their circumstances and, in the context of the "deeming" of notices to be served, of any change of address. This new right for the defendant to apply for a further hearing is additional to, and independent of, the court's power, as specified by clause 40, to hold a further hearing to consider activating a postponed warrant in the event of further default. I hope that that shows that we have done some constructive thinking since Committee stage and that these measures will be acceptable to the House.

Mr. Soley: I am grateful to the Minister. This is a difficult area in which we do not wish to undermine the court's authority. However, the Minister recognised in Committee that there had been occasions when a warrant might not have been served effectively because of reasons that were outside the control of the person who was to receive the warrant — for example, if that person was working away from home or in hospital. As this measure has been designed to meet such special cases, I accept the new clause.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

RESTRICTIONS ON THE IMPOSITION OF CUSTODIAL SENTENCES ON OFFENDERS UNDER 21

"(1) The following subsection shall be substituted for section 1(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 1982—

"(4) Where a person under 21 years of age is convicted or found guilty of an offence, the court may not—

(a) make a detention centre order in respect of him under section 4 below;

(b) pass a youth custody sentence on him under section 6 below; or

(c) pass a sentence of custody for life on him under section 8(2) below;

unless it is satisfied that the circumstances, including the nature and gravity of the offence, are such that if the offender were aged 21 or over the court would pass a sentence of imprisonment and that no other method of dealing with him is appropriate because—

(i) he has a history of failure to respond to non-custodial penalties and the court is satisfied that he is unable or unwilling to respond to non-custodial penalties; or

(ii) no other sentence would be adequate to protect the public from serious harm; or

(iii) the offence was so serious that a non-custodial sentence cannot be justified".

(2) The following subsection shall be substituted for section 2(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 1982—

"(4) Where a court deals with a person under 21 years of age by a method whose use in the case of such a person is restricted by section 1(4) above, it shall state in open court the reasons why, having taken account of those restrictions, it is satisfied that no other method of dealing with him is appropriate".'.—*[Mr. Clive Soley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Soley: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This new clause is designed to consider the problem of locking up young people. We know that in this country we lock up more young people than any other comparable country in the Western world. We also know that the failure rate—the number of people who are reconvicted within two years of release — is incredibly high, far higher than that for almost any other form of disposal. The failure rate varies between 70 per cent. and 80 per cent., although occasionally it falls a little below 70 per cent. Therefore, by any standard, it is a pretty disastrous form of treatment for young people which does little other than to teach them to live in an institution, and perhaps make it that much easier for them to return.

It is in all our interests to reduce the number of young people in custody and to use other sentences wherever possible. That is not to avoid the obvious problem that some young people, like some older people, can be a danger to society. If that is the case, they must be locked up. However, from all the evidence from the Home Office and elsewhere, we know that we lock up far too many people. Successive attempts have been made to tighten up this issue. The new clause tightens up the guidelines that a court must apply before imposing a custodial sentence on a young person under 21 years of age.

I expect that the entire House, including Ministers, will join me in thanking the parliamentary all-party penal affairs group which is behind the thinking on this. I should like to thank also Mr. Paul Cavadino, who has done work of a high standard for that Committee. I understand that that does not always receive the recognition that it deserves.

[Mr. Soley]

The new clause spells out—as has been spelt out on other occasions—that a young person should not be locked up unless

"(i) he has a history of failure to respond to non-custodial penalties and the court is satisfied that he is unable or unwilling to respond to non-custodial penalties; or

(ii) no other sentence would be adequate to protect the public from serious harm; or

(iii) the offence was so serious that a non-custodial sentence cannot be justified."

The new clause continues by adding to existing Acts of Parliament. It states:

"(4) Where a court deals with a person under 21 years of age by a method whose use in the case of such a person is restricted by section 1(4) above, it shall state in open court the reasons why, having taken account of those restrictions, it is satisfied that no other method of dealing with him is appropriate."

As I have already stated, the new clause clarifies the statutory guidance currently governing the use of custody for young offenders, contained in section 1(4) of the Criminal Justice Act 1982. In practice, the criteria contained in that section of the 1982 Act have been of some use in guiding the courts. However, many courts have applied them loosely and that has considerably reduced their usefulness. Most magistrates and justices' clerks appear to welcome the idea of more detailed statutory reasons for custody. A research study by Elizabeth Burney, conducted in 12 magistrates courts, concluded that the principle of giving statutory reasons in court was

"on the whole welcomed, especially by the justices' clerks. It was felt that, as guidelines, they set the right tone, encouraged the right approach and (taken together with rules about legal aids and social inquiry reports) provided a series of hoops through which sentencers must pass before they could take the dire step of depriving a young person of his liberty."

4.45 pm

As I have already stated, it is not just a question of the dire step of depriving a young person of his or her liberty, but a recognition that that is often one of the least effective ways of dealing with a young person, if our interest is in preventing that person from re-offending — which I assume is the case for us all.

Elizabeth Burney's study continues:

"The process 'concentrates the mind and stresses accountability' in the words of one justices' clerk; and a chairman added that it could also be a useful check on 'the odd wayward magistrate' who would otherwise want custody regardless of finer points".

However, other research has shown that the three criteria that I quoted from section 1(4) of the 1982 Act are interpreted differently by different courts, and often much more widely than was intended. In the first instance—that is to say,

"because it appears to the court that he is unable or unwilling to respond to non-custodial penalties"—

it has been suggested that, although there was a good deal of agreement between those interviewed about how that criterion might apply, on detailed interpretation there was considerable scope for individual differences in sentencing.

A study by Frances Reynolds, of juveniles sentenced in a Northamptonshire juvenile court in 1984, included a case in which the magistrates justified custody on that criterion because

"other disposals such as cautions or conditional discharges have not been successful".

We are attempting to deal with such issues in these provisions.

A study of a juvenile court in the north-east of England stated that some magistrates used the phrase "unable or unwilling"

"to send a juvenile into custody when his only previous disposal was a conditional discharge . . . another juvenile had previously had an attendance centre order and the report was recommending either a community service order or supervision as the means of disposal for the current offences".

No-one who supported the 1982 Act could have conceived that a custodial sentence could be justified on the ground that an offender has re-offended if his only previous disposals had been cautions, a conditional discharge, or an attendance centre order.

Turning to the second criterion mentioned in the 1982 Act—

"because a custodial sentence is necessary for the protection of the public"—

the phrase "protection of the public" is open to wide interpretations. Elizabeth Burney commented:

"Some defined it narrowly as relating strictly to the dangerousness of the individual offender in terms of physical harm threatened to another, or else to the public at large on account of pathological behaviour . . . some sentencers preferred to ascribe 'protection' to the supposed deterrent effect on the individual of receiving a custodial sentence."

That is a different interpretation from what is normally meant, either in this place or in the higher courts when they are considering the protection of the public. Elizabeth Burney continued:

"In other courts however—and one in particular—there was a very definite view that 'protection of the public' embraced general deterrence."

In other words, the courts considered the deterrent effect on other people. Therefore, those provisions have proved ambiguous.

The third criterion in the new clause is:

"because the offence was so serious that a non-custodial sentence cannot be justified".

Different definitions of seriousness were used by magistrates. For some offences, for which custodial sentences were justified on "seriousness", the grounds were not nearly as serious as many committed by numerous recidivists in the sample by Frances Reynolds who were given non-custodial sentences. Therefore, the Act as it now stands has been widely interpreted.

One way of improving matters would be for the Court of Appeal to step in and lay down guidelines on the way in which the courts should interpret section 1(4). Indeed, following the research studies to which I have referred, in a series of judgments the Court of Appeal has begun to lay down guidance on the "seriousness of the offence" criterion—for example, for offences of violence, arson, robbery and burglary which do or do not satisfy the criterion. However, few cases so far have shed any light on the "protection of the public" or the "unable or unwilling" to comply criteria.

The parliamentary all-party penal affairs group had hoped that the process of judicial guidance would continue. I think that we would all join in that hope, as it would increase the effectiveness of section 1(4). However, some of the other suggestions of this new clause would also help.

The new clause makes the following principal changes in the three criteria contained in section 1(4) of the 1982 Act. First, on the criterion

"because it appears to the court that he is unable or unwilling to respond to non-custodial penalties",

the new clause specifies that the need for circumstances

"such that if the offender were aged 21 or over the court would pass a sentence of imprisonment"

should be an additional requirement for that and the other criteria. That is designed to met one of the earlier points that I raised—that, as presently formulated, it has been stated that the criterion

"can suggest, at least to a bench of magistrates insufficiently advised, that the fact that other non-custodial dispositions have already been tried and 'failed' is a sufficient reason to resort to a custodial sentence regardless of the seriousness of the present offence."

We believe that that will meet the problem.

Secondly, a requirement of

"a history of failure to respond to non-custodial penalties"

has been added to the above. The word "history" is used in other parts of the 1982 Act and it cannot reasonably be interpreted as a failure to respond to a single conditional discharge, for example, as the present criterion has been interpreted in some cases.

To the second requirement, that a custodial sentence is necessary for the protection of the public, we have again added the phrase "serious harm" which has been used in mental health legislation and is interpreted as relating to serious offences against the person. It would prevent courts from using this criterion to justify custody for such offences as shoplifting, as has happened on some occasions.

The third requirement, that

"the offence was so serious that a non-custodial sentence cannot be justified",

has been left unaltered, because the Court of Appeal has already begun the process of usefully clarifying this criterion and will no doubt continue the process in future judgments. The all-party group favours this approach as a way of reinforcing and building on the criteria established in 1982 which the Court of Appeal has begun to refine and to which its judgments have increasingly drawn the attention of the lower courts.

Finally, the new clause requires that courts shall state in open court, having taken into account all those restrictions, the reason why it is satisfied that no other method of dealing with the offender is appropriate. I hope that that will meet many of the problems that courts have found in interpreting the Act. I hope that it will lead not only to a reduced use of custodial sentences for young people when they are inappropriate and counter-productive but to a more consistent form of sentencing for young people.

Mr. Mellor: As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) has made clear, the new clause is the work of the parliamentary all-party penal affairs group. It seeks to replace part of the 1982 Act, which was brought about by that same group winning a vote against the Government during consideration of the legislation in the other place. At that time, the Government were doubtful whether statutory restrictions of this type were effective, and we are still somewhat sceptical. However, we see no objection to these proposals being accepted as a refinement of the thinking behind the 1982 Act. I shall recommend to the House that it accepts the new clause.

The 1982 Act simplified and rationalised the structure of sentencing for juveniles and young offenders, in effect replacing the mish-mash of custodial sentences, many of which were indeterminate, with two sentences, youth custody and detention centre, while creating a framework in which alternatives to custody could continue to be developed. Community service was extended to 16-year-olds and some 2,000 orders were made in 1985, showing it to be a useful extension of the courts' powers; and the courts' power to make supervision orders were strengthened. The Government have lent their support to the growth in the use of caution. The number of young offenders cautioned for indictable offences increased from 98,000 in 1982 to 122,000 in 1985.

The hon. Gentleman argued that the 1982 Act has led to an increase in the use of custody, but I am not sure whether that is the case. In 1982, the last year of the old arrangements, some 7,100 juveniles went into custody, which represented 7·5 per cent. of all sentences and cautions. In 1985, 5,900 juveniles went into custody, which represented 6·1 per cent. of all sentences and cautions, and therefore a decrease. He is on superficially stronger ground in the case of young adults. In 1982, 22,100 young adults went into custody, which represented 17·9 per cent. of all sentences and cautions. In 1985, 24,400 young adults went into custody which represented 20·1 per cent. of all sentences and cautions.

It is worth bearing in mind that the 1982 Act abolished suspended sentences and imprisonment, so we must add to the 1982 figure the 5,500 suspended sentences of imprisonment imposed on young adults, many of which undoubtedly would have been imposed as imprisonment as a result of further offending. The picture is by no means as clear-cut as the hon. Gentleman asserted. There is plenty of evidence that the 1982 Act has worked well overall. I have not the slightest objection to changing the criteria. The PAPPAG has had second thoughts and we are happy to endorse them, if the House is.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before we move to the next proposed new clause I have a brief statement to make. Mr. Speaker has asked me to inform the House that he has reconsidered his selection of amendments and has decided to add new clause 20. That new clause will now be called immediately after new clause 19 and grouped for debate with it are amendments Nos. 60, 61 and Government amendment No. 62.

New Clause 3

Corporal Punishment

"(1) Any person who shall—

(a) unlawfully assault or beat any other person;

(b) make use of provoking language or behaviour tending to a breach of the peace;

or

(c) commit an act of criminal damage shall be liable on summary conviction in addition to, or instead of, current penalties, if the offender is a male child or male young person, to be whipped.

(2) The expression "child" and "young person" mean respectively an individual of or over the age of 10 and under 14 and an individual of or over the age of 14 and under 18.

(3) The instrument used shall, in the case of a child, be a cane, and in any other case shall be a birch rod.

(4) The court in its sentence shall specify the number of strokes to be inflicted, being in the case of a child not more than six strokes, and in the case of any other person not more than 12 stokes.

(5) The whipping shall be inflicted privately as soon as practicable after sentence.

(6) The whipping shall be inflicted by a constable in the presence of an inspector or other officer of police of higher rank than a constable or by some other person appointed by

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

the Court, and, in the case of a child or young person also in the presence if he desires to be present of the parent or guardian of the child or young person.

(7) The instrument to be used shall be—

(a) in the case of a male child who is under the age of 14 years a light cane not exceeding four feet in length and not exceeding half an inch in diameter;

(b) in the case of a male person who is over the age of 14 a birch rod of the following dimensions:

Weight not exceeding	9 ounces
Length from end of handle to tip of spray	40 inches
Length of handle	15 inches
Circumference of spray at centre	6 inches
Circumference of handle at top of binding	3½ inches
Circumference of handle 6 inches from end	3¼ inches

(8) In all cases where a court is empowered to impose a sentence of whipping a medical report as to whether the offender is fit to receive the punishment will be made available to the Magistrates before they consider sentence.

(9) The whipping shall be inflicted on the posterior over the child's ordinary cloth trousers.

(10) A medical practitioner shall be present during a birching and may at his discretion order the stopping of the punishment at any time.

(11) Where a birching has been stopped on medical grounds a report of the facts shall be forwarded immediately to the Home Secretary.".—*[Mr. Hawksley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Warren Hawksley (The Wrekin): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause provides the House with an opportunity to debate corporal punishment and it is desirable that we should do so. In both the 1979 and 1983 general elections the Government were elected on a policy of law and order and our electors were looking for great things. They have seen an increase in expenditure of 40 per cent. on law and order, and 14,500 extra policemen, many of whom have been taken out of their panda cars and put on the beat, yet the crime figures tell a sad story.

The latest figures show a tragic national picture. In my constituency they show a 10 per cent. increase in crime last year. I know that the Opposition led the criticism of those figures, and it is right that our constituents should call for action. If we have not seen the due results from the increases in expenditure and extra police, we are entitled to ask what has gone wrong. We should consider deterrent sentences with encouragement and enthusiasm.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I should like to ask the hon. Gentleman a question so that we can consider his speech in the context of his answer. Is it his view that the United Kingdom should cease to be a signatory to the European convention on human rights?

Mr. Hawksley: The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) should wait and listen, because I shall come to that matter in a moment.

Mr. Carlile: Answer yes or no.

Mr. Hawksley: I shall deal shortly with the judgment of that court.

Some people may be slightly confused about where I chose the details of new clause 3. Unlike the hon. and learned Gentleman, I am no lawyer and I have no experience in drafting, so I used the wording of legislation that has been applicable in the Isle of Man for many years, namely, the Petty Sessions and Summary Jurisdiction Act 1927, which has stood the test of time and has been of benefit by being on the statute book.

5 pm

On my last visit to the Isle of Man to see how they tackled law and order, I heard from the chief of police on the island that many visitors, even after the birch was no longer used, when they arrived at Douglas would ask the first policeman they saw whether use of the birch was still permitted by statute, and when the policeman said yes, the visitors invariably said, "Do not worry, we will not cause any trouble." I think that that indicates the success of a deterrent. This provision would be a deterrent. It worked on the Isle of Man and it would work here.

If the new clause is accepted by the House in principle, I would be only too happy to see the details amended in another place to bring it into line with other legislation, rather than have what is applicable in the Isle of Man.

If increased expenditure and more policemen have failed to defeat crime, and if the number of assaults is rising, what will solve the problem? Deterrent sentences work, and corporal punishment should be used as a deterrent.

When I first raised this issue in Committee on the Criminal Justice Bill in 1982, the debate took place over one day and my speech proposing the amendment took one hour to make with comments from the Opposition. I have no intention of speaking for that length of time now, as this issue can be dealt with quickly.

When corporal punishment was considered in 1948, crimes of violence against the person were running at 5,183 a year. By 1981 that figure had gone up to 100,000. Since 1981 it has risen to 125,500, an increase of 25 per cent. Those are the latest figures, which were published the other day. Action is needed, and I believe that the public support action. The last public opinion poll that I saw suggested that about 70 per cent. wanted both capital and corporal punishment. Letters that I have received over the last two weeks have shown support for my proposal.

The clause offers, not a finite sentence, but punishment that would be available in appropriate cases to our courts to be used in addition to the remedies that are already available. I believe that most criminals who commit offences at football matches, or who mug the elderly, often for only a few pounds, are basically cowards and would be worried and frightened by the thought of corporal punishment.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that those who commit horrible offences of violence will be worried if they think that they will be caught and sentenced to custody? The problem is that the people who commit such offences are rarely caught. Does the hon. Gentleman think that his proposal would change that at all?

Mr. Hawksley: I agree that it is important that criminals are apprehended, and I welcome the 14,500 extra policemen that have been provided by the Government.

When the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) had responsibility for law and order, he succeeded in getting the police into their panda cars. I welcome the Government's action, because it will ensure that more football hooligans and muggers are caught. Since 1948 we have failed to make any inroads into the

fight against crime and criminals. I suggest that this deterrent sentence should be placed in the armoury of the courts.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery started to shout foul and said that the European Court of Human Rights has said that this cannot be done. I would lose no sleep if we left the European Court of Human Rights. Some of its decisions are most extraordinary. The Tyrer case rested on article 3 of the convention, which says that no one shall be subject to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The court cleared us — although the charge concerned the Isle of Man—on the question of torture or inhuman treatment, and ruled against us only on the question whether it was degrading.

The British judge in that case, Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, not only ruled in our favour, but denied that corporal punishment was degrading. I believe that we should pursue that argument in that court. Is it really degrading to birch a youngster who is prepared to commit horrific crimes at football matches and to mug elderly ladies? I say no. If anything is degrading, it is the treatment that those criminals give to their victims.

I hope that the House and the Minister will accept the arguments that we put forward on the new clause. If not, I ask that consideration be given to setting up an independent inquiry, such as the 1968 Barry inquiry, into whether the reintroduction of corporal punishment would be a deterrent. It is now time—20 years after that 1968 inquiry—to have another inquiry and to argue the case if necessary before the European Court of Human Rights. I would welcome such a report, and would look forward to it with interest. I believe that the public are asking for action now. By virtue of the new clause, the House has the opportunity of so acting. I hope that the House and the Minister will accept my new clause.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I believe that the new clause is repugnant, regressive and thoroughly reprehensible. The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) asks not only that this House turn back the clock, but that the clock be turned back to a time that never was, a time when he imagines that public lust for punishment was gratified by corporal punishment. Where does the hon. Gentleman get this nonsense about successful deterrence by the judicial flogging of youngsters?

The hon. Gentleman, in putting forward the view that these sentences would have some real deterrent value, is tearing up all the criminological research, including very detailed research that has been carried out by the Home Office under the successive Governments on punishment of young offenders. He is tearing up all the judgments as to how best to deal with young offenders. In addition, he is tearing up what is known of the experience of many schools, especially schools in the private sector, in which corporal punishment has been widely used over a long period. *[Interruption.]*

I hear an interruption from a sedentary position from the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), who suggests that it was used successfully. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman went to a public school, but my recollection, having been to one, is that corporal punishment had little, if any, deterrent value. Few boys felt in any way deterred by the fear of the cane.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Some even like it.

Mr. Carlile: I am reminded that there have been those who have come to like it. Leaving that aside, my view and that of many in education who have been able to judge these things over many years is that corporal punishment in schools never acted as a serious deterrent to anybody for anything to any significant extent.

Furthermore, the clause is absolute nonsense. It seeks to introduce into our law a new crime, that of provoking language. I have been subjected to provoking language for the past five minutes from the other side of the Chamber. Is the hon. Member for The Wrekin really asking magistrates courts in his constituency or anywhere else to decide what is provoking language? There is also

"behaviour tending to a breach of the peace".

What behaviour provokes such a breach? *[Interruption.]* I wish that Conservative Members would listen. Their pleasure in this new clause is all too worrying. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that behaviour tending to, but not causing, a breach of the peace should justify judicial flogging?

Another part of the clause requires whipping, as they are pleased to call it, to be

"inflicted privately as soon as practicable after sentence."

Those hon. Members who support this new clause wish to deprive young people of their right of appeal, as is clear from that part of the clause.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): The hon. and learned Gentleman will recall from his public school days, as I do, that part of the punishment was the length of time between committing the crime and the punishment being inflicted. The clause says that that time should be lessened. The punishment always waits for the crime. The hon. and learned Gentleman is saying that there should be a great length of time between the time of the offence and the time of the punishment. That is worse than what the clause is proposing.

Mr. Carlile: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, what he is suggesting is more worthy of South Africa than of the United Kingdom. Next, we shall have the hon. Gentleman, whose views on South Africa are well known, introducing an amendment that includes rhino whips. He is saying that he and his colleagues in favour of this new clause want to get rid of the right of appeal. At least we now have it from the mouth of one of the sponsors of the new clause.

Mr. Hawksley *rose*——

Mr. Carlile: No, I shall not give way, because we have other new clauses to debate.

In addition, we have heard—at least he put it, as one would expect, frankly—from the hon. Member for The Wrekin that he believes that the 40 years that we have spent as signatories to the European convention on human rights should be thrown away, so that we can have judicial flogging. He also believes that all the advantages that we have had from the convention and the advantages that we have had from ensuring that other signatories adhere to the convention should be thrown away to enable judicial flogging.

Mr. John Carlisle: Name one advantage.

Mr. Carlile: With pleasure. The Interception of Communications Act was promoted by the hon. Gentleman's Government during this Parliament, and most of its provisions were supported by hon. Members

[Mr. Carlile]

on both sides of the House. That is one occasion when this Government have taken advantage of the European convention, but there are many others.

Do the supporters of this new clause really believe that medical practitioners, as required by the new clause, and police officers, as required by the new clause, are prepared to take part in judicial flogging? What a lot of nonsense.

The answer to crime among young people is not flogging them. It is better education, which includes some understanding of the role and activities of the police. It is better policing, which places more police officers on the beat so that young people know who they are and expect them to be within the community. It is better sentencing provisions, non-custodial as well as custodial. The real punishment for a child or a young person who commits an offence is when a police officer, almost invariably politely and fairly, comes to that young person, tells him that he has been caught, takes him to the police station, interviews him, and ensures that, if necessary, he is brought up before the court, and when that young person feels the whole panoply of sanctions of the law brought down on him. This new clause is certainly not the way.

5.15 pm

Mr. John Carlisle: I support my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley). I deplore the words of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who obviously has not learnt from the experiences that he, among many on both sides of the House, has had of suffering this form of punishment.

The new clause is introduced on the basis of the further deterrent that should be available to the courts in language that the sort of people who perpetrate such crimes for which this punishment is available would understand. The House is right to say to those who physically abuse others, as they do, without thought of property or person, should receive exactly the same treatment at the hands of the courts.

In any society, the courts have every right to punish such people in the way that they have punished their victims. This is the type of language that they will appreciate. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery talked about delay, but it is the very swiftness of punishment that the deterrent would give that is part of what makes it so attrative. I suggest to him that it is attractive because it is swift and has an immediate effect, rather than keeping those offenders—many of whom will be young—of both sexes waiting for some judgment, with the delay that inevitably occurs after these incidents.

We have suffered physical crimes in recent times. That is one reason why my hon. Friends are bringing forward tomorrow night the clause on capital punishment that I shall support. One of the reasons why we should inflict this type of punishment on these young offenders is that they so readily inflict it on others. I support the new clause. My hon. Friend for The Wrekin is absolutely right. I supported such a move in 1982 and I hope that the House sees fit to pass the new clause tonight.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I am completely agnostic on the principle that lies behind this proposed new clause, but with some reluctance I have to say to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) that I shall not be able to support him. I accept that he is addressing two genuine matters. First, there can be no doubt that large numbers—I am not sure whether it is a majority—of our fellow citizens believe that there is a place for corporal punishment. They tell us that in our constituencies every week. Secondly, it is a fact that among our society today is a significant and growing number of vicious young beasts who, in my judgment, could well be more responsive to corporal punishment than they are to the range of punishments that are generally available through the courts.

It was the common parlance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you and I were first elected to this House, that there was no such thing as a depraved child, only a deprived child, and that sociological dictum informed a good deal of our criminal justice and sentencing policy for some years. From experience, I have to say that that is not the case. It is a fact that perhaps the most serious crimes are committed now by youngsters between the ages of about 12 and 15, demonstrating, among other things, that whatever else the reason for their crimes, unemployment is not the main one.

Much extremely brutal and violent crime is committed by young males between those ages. I shall detain the House merely to give one illustration. Not long ago, an elderly widow in her 80s was imprisoned in the airing cupboard of her council house. She was kept there for many weeks. When her body was eventually taken out, her weight had fallen to four and a half stone. She had lived in darkness amid the bodily juices that had accumulated during the period of her confinement and torture. She was kept there by three youngsters who had stolen her pension book and gone to the post office each week to obtain her pension by forgery. The old lady was about 84, and the youngsters who tortured and killed her were aged 14, 12 and 11, respectively.

It is the common experience of the police that many extremely violent crimes are perpetrated by very young people. However, the new clause suggests——

Mr. Alex Carlile: What were the sentences?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am afraid that I cannot help the hon. and learned Gentleman, but the sentence was certainly not physical chastisement.

The issue before us is whether——

Ms. Clare Short: The hon. Gentleman has told us of an awful crime, although one such story does not prove that young people are more violent than older people. He said that the old lady died. If that is so, I presume that the offenders are now detained during Her Majesty's pleasure. One whipping would not be adequate to punish such a crime. How can he call that example into play to justify the new clause?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The hon. Lady should listen more carefully. I said at the outset that I could not support the new clause. However, I was saying, and I repeat, that my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin is addressing a genuine problem, first because, whether we like it or not, many of our constituents believe that corporal punishment has a role to play, and, secondly, because it is a fact that there is in our society a significant and growing number of young beasts who inflict the most appalling physical tortures upon the elderly people whom they abuse.

The question is whether the new clause would play a useful part in deterring such conduct, and my difficulties

with that are twofold. First, there is no way that, in practice, we could achieve the intention of the clause, that whippings should be administered as soon as practicable after sentencing. There would be bound to be all kinds of prospects of appeal. The whippings would need to take place in the presence not only of parents or guardians, but of a medical practitioner. In some circumstances, it might be necessary for another party—for example, a social worker—to be present. The whippings could not take place in private; they would become a quasi-public exhibition. Inevitably, and rightly, the press would be interested, so the whipping would become a rather macabre and dismaying semi-public event.

Secondly, subsection (6) states:

"The whipping shall be inflicted by a constable"—

presumably a police constable—

"in the presence of an inspector or other officer of police of higher rank".

I cannot believe that my hon. Friends—whose purpose I respect—can have consulted the police service before drafting that proposal. I have not consulted the police on the matter, but I am sure that the Police Federation of England and Wales, the Scottish Police Federation or the Police Federation for Northern Ireland would unanimously resist the proposal, for several reasons.

First, a very large number of youngsters could fall to be whipped, and a police officer in a Bridewell—in this case a police station—might thus be required over a period of time to administer whippings to a great many youngsters. Any police officer who did that would become a pariah in the local community. Neither he nor his family could possibly live in the community if it became known that he was regularly administering whippings.

Secondly, the overwhelming majority of police officers go into the service for a purpose entirely different from the administration of punishment. Their purpose is to prevent breaches of the criminal law and to uphold the Queen's peace. To turn them into surrogate whippers on behalf of the law would be to go against the whole purpose of the police service. Any police officer who was willing to undertake that duty, week in, week out, would not be the kind of man I would wish to have in the police service.

Therefore, while I have a good deal of respect for my hon. Friend's purpose in the new clause, I do not think that, in choosing the police, he has chosen the right instrument. The whippings could not be achieved in the speedy fashion that he describes and, on balance, I do not believe that the new clause would fulfil my hon. Friend's purpose.

Mr. Lawrence: I did not intend to speak in the debate. I have not put my name to the clause and I shall not support it in the Lobby because it is impracticable. However, the arrant nonsense talked by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) should not be allowed to pass without the injection of at least some common sense into the debate.

A large proportion of my constituents deplore the appalling level of violent lawlessness in our society. However, whatever resources are made available and whatever action is taken by the Government to promote law and order—and I would be the first to praise the Government in that respect—still the violence increases and the peak age for offenders is 15. None of the 15-year-olds can be affected by economic punishment and, under article 3 of the European convention on human rights, none of them can apparently suffer physical pain, mental pain or anything degrading or humiliating. What then is left of punishment?

When I go to Uttoxeter market or to the market place at Burton, people ask me, "What are you doing about law and order? What are you doing about our schools, which are churning out not only truants but young vandals and muggers who have not the slightest respect for others in society?" That is a matter for concern, which was not nearly as prevalent 20 or 30 years ago, before the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) and other hon. Members—mostly, although not exclusively, from the Labour Benches—decided that what was needed to deal with criminality was the soft, gentle, kind, caring, helpful and non-violent approach. It has been an absolute disaster.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and other hon. Gentlemen laugh when my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) puts forward an alternative proposal, which at least makes some kind of attempt to respond to the wishes and demands of the people whom we represent. Those who support the gently, gently, softly, softly, kindly, kindly approach, which has utterly and completely failed, ought to be quiet and not laugh.

5.30 pm

Mr. Ashton: The hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned his constituency. Is it not a fact that the BBC programme "The Monocled Mutineer" featured a man called Percy Toplis who I think came from the hon. Gentleman's constituency, or from next door. The programme revealed that he was birched at the age of 11, and he finally finished up a few years later shooting a policeman after he had deserted from the Army. What good did the birching do him?

Mr. Lawrence: That is very interesting, but I doubt whether such a confused individual could have come from my constituency. Of course it is possible to point to examples, perhaps many of them, of how corporal punishment at school has had a counter-productive effect and not produced successful results. I am not talking about that. I am saying that hon. Members should not laugh when I and my hon. Friends are expressing the genuine concerns, worries and fears of people who do not accept that corporal punishment in the home or in the school has to be thrown out of the window. The way to control youngsters in their early stages is to use a firm hand, if necessary. We have sold the pass, but if our schools had managed to control youngsters through the use of corporal punishment there would be less truancy, vandalism and violence among the 15, 16 and 17-year-olds in our society.

I am sorry that in a matter of this kind, in which I think that the spirit is not only right but is a response to the proper demands of the people in our society, time has passed us by and it is no longer a practical proposal. There are too many obstacles and it is not something that the Government can countenance. I speak because I do not think that hon. Members should laugh at the kind of feeling that is enshrined in this clause.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I rise to support my hon. Friend. My name is on the new clause—not because I get any pleasure from the thought that evil

[Mr. Bill Walker]

young people will end up being birched, but because constituents — *[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen never listen to arguments; that is one reason for the situation that we are in today. The logic of the argument for the retention of corporal punishment was not listened to in the halcyon days when the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was Home Secretary, when he talked about the kind of civilised society that he was creating, from which we are now suffering. The right hon. Gentleman obviously does not have the same concerns as his constituents and those of other hon. Members who live on the council estates and have to tolerate the awful, vicious, nasty youngsters that are running around those estates.

I grew up on a council estate when youngsters like that did not exist. One of the reasons was that at that time the law had a much more effective way of dealing with those who transgressed. It is true that some may have graduated to much more vicious and evil crimes; I do not doubt that at all. But there were many more who were deterred, and it is the absence of adequate deterrents today that worries our constituents; it is the absence of what they see as adequate deterrents. It is quite right that this matter should be properly debated. Are we going to say in the House today that there is nothing effective that we can do about the growing number of young people who initially are basically nasty and who, if they are not deterred, can become evil and terribly vicious?

It is a sad fact that those who get away with these basically nasty activities move on to more nasty, vicious actions. That is why we get increasing numbers of offenders. That is why 15 is the age of the majority of them.

Is it not terribly sad that, when we have raised the school-leaving age to 16 as a statutory requirement, we should get this problem? The statutory age when I was at school was 14, but there were certainly no 15-year-olds at that time running around council estates causing mayhem and frightening old ladies, pensioners and others. That is the situation that exists on many of our large council estates, and it is quite wrong. I would have thought that Opposition Members, who often represent parts of the country where these large estates exist, would certainly have been much more concerned.

This is not an occasion for personal abuse; it is not a matter on which we should attack each other or each other's integrity. That is what I find so disturbing—that if one wants to deter, one's integrity is attacked. I cannot understand that kind of logic.

Mr. Alex Carlile *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Walker: The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery is shaking his head. Perhaps when he reads his speech tomorrow he will realise how offensive he was and indeed how he suggested that there was no integrity among those who put their names to this new clause.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman give chapter and verse of the evidence which justifies this absurd claim that what is proposed in the clause would have any real deterrent value at all? I believe that there is no such evidence, that the hon. Gentleman cannot point to any and that that is why we have heard nothing about any. I regret to put it this way, but in my view it is just their bigoted opinion.

Mr. Walker: The hon. and learned Gentleman has again adopted the tactics of the clever lawyer, but he is not clever enough, because there is substantial evidence. The evidence that I gave was that when I was a schoolboy, when I was growing up on a fairly rough and tough council estate there were not the numbers of youngsters indulging in vicious crimes that there are today. That is a statement which the hon. and learned Gentleman cannot refute, because the facts are all there for anyone to examine. If one examines the figures for immediately before, during and after the war, one sees that there was nothing like the number of youngsters involved in those vicious, hideous nasty crimes that there is today, because deterrence was available.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Why?

Mr. Walker: I sometimes wonder where the hon. and learned Gentleman and other hon. Gentlemen like him grew up, because I remember very well what the circumstances were. That is all I can say to hon. Gentlemen who attack the integrity of those who believe that we must look for and try to find alternatives.

I take the point made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) that, sadly, we have moved into an era, as a result of the signing of the European convention on human rights and of other factors, in which Governments now find themselves boxed in. But the right place to debate these matters is in this House, so that the country knows that we care. At some future date, we may wish to repudiate agreements that have been entered into internationally, as indeed has happened before. We may wish to opt out at some future date. It is right that we should always put forward the views of our constituents so that they are on the record and at some future date may be acted upon. That is why I support this new clause.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): The hon. Gentleman is talking about council estates. Does he not think that prior to 1979 many of the kids he refers to, certainly in the mining communities, would have gone to work at 4.30 in the morning? Does he realise that of the 750 kids who left school in my constituency at the last school-leaving period, only 11 have found work? Those kids would normally go to the pits. Work is the deterrent for the youngsters.

Mr. Walker: Without realising it, the hon. Gentleman has made my argument. If he reads carefully what he has just said, he will see that what he said in effect is that youngsters of 14 and over would be going to work. He has to realise that over 50 per cent. of those who commit crimes are under 15.

Mr. Lofthouse: We were at work at 14.

Mr. Walker: Yes, but today over 50 per cent. of the youngsters who find themselves in trouble are under 14. That is what the hon. Gentleman has to realise. That was not changed by the alteration in the school-leaving age, it was the fact——

Mr. Lofthouse *rose——*

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should listen to what I have to say, as I listened to him. Youngsters between the ages of 10 and 14 are appearing in our courts today. Things would be no different during the period he was talking about because they would still have been at school

and would have been subjected to the disciplines of the school at that time, which included the use of corporal punishment and all the other deterrents I have mentioned. The hon. Gentleman has got it all wrong. Unfortunately, he does not want to face the facts.

Ms. Clare Short: Like other hon. Members, I did not intend to speak in the debate. However, if such crude and silly things can be said in the Chamber, they need to be challenged, and we cannot let them go unchallenged.

The Government are trying to support a myth and avoid the link that is known and proven whereby in any developed society, when unemployment rises, crime rises. The Prime Minister has falsely asserted that that is not proven but research evidence is absolutely clear. The Prime Minister has denied that twice from the Dispatch Box and she is wrong. The research evidence shows otherwise. The excuse she used—it has been used again today—is to suggest that no one over the school-leaving age commits crime. That is nonsense. We know that some crimes are committed by young people under the school-leaving age but masses of crimes are committed by young people over the school-leaving age and under 25. Conservative Members know that, but they just want to distort the facts and fabricate the evidence to justify their own ignorance and prejudice.

Conservative Members have called in aid their own constituencies. In my constituency, there is an enormous problem of rising crime and a terrible problem of burglary, which means that most people are living with the fear of burglary all the time. It has risen rapidly in recent years There is an enormous fear of street attacks and all sorts of other crimes. However, none of my constituents has ever said that the answer is corporal punishment. It is obvious that my constituents have a great deal more wisdom, intelligence and understanding of the nature of the world and the nature of the problem than Conservative Members.

Conservative Members have been exchanging views about where they grew up. I grew up in my constituency, and there was not that sort of fear and crime. I remember when we used to hear horror stories about the United States of America. We used to hear how everyone feared burglary, had alarms on their houses and used to take loose change in their pockets to give to the muggers. That was the society they lived in. We could not believe that, and we never thought that it would be like that here, but now it is getting like that. We must ask why. The answer is that society is more divided, bitter and nasty than it ever was in my youth and than I ever expected to see in my lifetime. It is creating a nasty, brutalised atmosphere, a lack of morality and a lack of sharing and concern for each other. This new clause would be a further brutalisation.

5.45 pm

What respect would we have for our criminal justice system if it took in young people and beat them when they committed crimes? More and more people would feel antagonistic to the system, they would reject it and lose their respect for it. That is what would come about. Conservative Members are not seeking to solve the problems of crime to make a safer and better society, but are seeking further brutalisation, and they would create nastier and nastier crimes.

The extremely important question is, what evidence do they have that beating and whipping would reduce the rate of crime? On one occasion at my junior school, when I was about six, I was hit by a nun with a pointer. I still remember that, and I still have a sense of hatred towards her in my heart. She hit me twice on the hand. I also remember at my school many young lads who used to say, "I can take it." There were those tough kids who were always in trouble and who gloried in being able to be beaten and not mind. They were brutalised by the system and they had less and less respect for the school that hit them in that way.

There is no evidence that it would deter crime. Conservative Members should not just keep asserting that it will because there is no evidence. I feel confident that we have not yet reached the stage where this society has so little civilisation that people would seriously recommend corporal punishment. However, if we ever reached that stage it would be just a further twist in the bitterness, division, polarisation, violent and nasty crime and the lack of respect for our criminal justice system.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I support the basic contention of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) that corporal punishment should be available once more. It is a fact of life that we have some very nasty youngsters who just do not respect law and order. They have grown up in a permissive society under the poor parentage of people who do not believe in the punishment fitting the crime. These youngsters need quick and severe discipline as a way of correcting them and making them distinguish the difference between right and wrong.

I have always believed that discipline breeds respect, and the new clause would certainly bring about some additional respect, just as we once had in the Isle of Man. I can give an example of the "baby squad" in Leicester, which went out of its way to be nasty, to intimidate elderly people and to break into elderly people's houses. Instead of receiving instant and proper discipline when the members of the squad were caught, they effectively got away with it. We have had football hooligans charging into Leicester City football club. They should have been birched. If the clause were to be passed, I believe that they would be birched, and that would be good. We need to correct the anti-social, criminal miscreants who are to be seen wandering on our streets today, within a mile of the House of Commons, and certainly in the Brixtons and Islingtons and many other places of high inner-city deprivation.

Ms. Clare Short: What about Leicester?

Mr. Bruinvels: Yes, even in some parts of Leicester.

The fault must lie with the permissive society as advocated by softie Labour Home Secretaries, such as the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins). I want to see the punishment fitting the crime. The birch would certainly be an effective punishment. We must realise that many of our youngsters are potential law breakers. What punishment is available now? What sanctions are available to the courts today?

It is all very well for Opposition Members to laugh and think that we are being nasty and enjoying speaking in this way, but I can tell them that the majority of parents want to see discipline brought back into society. They do not always discipline their children quickly enough. They believe, wrongly, that the schools will bring about the discipline, but the schools are now precluded from using the cane, which is a great tragedy.

[Mr. Bruinvels]

The one disadvantage of the royal wedding of the Duke and Duchess of York was that on the eve of that wedding we had our important debate on corporal punishment. I was a teller for the Ayes in support of bringing back corporal punishment in the schools, but, because of the crowds outside in Parliament square, a number of hon. Members—12, I am told—were prevented from getting into the House to ensure that corporal punishment was still available in our schools. I think that it is a great tragedy that we do not have it.

The sanctions that exist in schools — lines, cold showers, a cold bath, detention—are no deterrent. How would they correct anything? The short sharp shock that was advocated by the deputy Prime Minister—now the Leader of the House of Lords—was considerably more effective. So it would have been with the cane. It could have been used as instant or belated punishment. Other hon. Members might have had to wait outside the headmaster's door — as I did — to receive a good whacking. It was a nerve-wracking experience waiting to see if he would really cane me. Opposition Members might have a few laughs about the length and weight of the cane, but it is the most effective punishment that is available.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bruinvels: The European Court of Human Rights has no right to interfere in our society. We did not ask it to tell us how to chastise our children. We did not ask it to interfere in the issue of wearing seat belts, either. Slowly, day by day, our rights are being eroded.

Parents want the new clause to be accepted. It may not be perfect, but it is right to protect our young people from themselves and to give the courts the power to order a caning. I do not believe that no policeman wants to mete out some sort of punishment. In the old days, when a policeman caught a young lad scrumping apples, he would have clipped him round the ear or taken him home to his parents for instant discipline. Now, they probably say that the apples are on the other side of the fence and that the lad can get away with what he has done, that he must have gone to the wrong kind of school, or that his dad is, perhaps, unemployed.

There is no excuse for ever breaking the law. The new clause would bring back a corrective balance and stop the rot. Tomorrow's parents are today's children. Those children are getting away with their crimes. Their parents want better from all of us, and only Conservative Members can bring about what those parents want.

Mr. Ashton: Slum childhoods are often a matter for hilarity in the House. We have heard about a slum childhood in Lancashire. I grew up on a slum in Sheffield, and there were two murders in the back yard of the house in which I lived before I reached the age of seven. Then, Adolf Hitler flattened the area in the blitz. There may have been more murders since then, but it was a rough neighbourhood. One of the two people was murdered by strangling, and the other was stabbed at a party by someone who had jumped off the toilet roof. It was the type of neighbourhood about which people do not brag when they are older, but they have an expert knowledge of crime and criminals.

I knew a man who had been birched as a boy. He lived in the next yard, and received 12 strokes of the birch for stealing half a hundredweight of coal. Another acquaintance got six strokes of the birch for stealing the co-op milkman's horse and running away with it. He looked after it very well at the local recreation ground for three days, and the judge said that he would have let him off if he had not stolen the money as well.

It is funny to look back at such events 40 years on, but the man who stole the coal and was birched for it brought up five sons to be the biggest villains and criminals that the city had ever known.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] I could name them. Three of them later deserted from the Army and finished up in the glasshouse, which did not do them any good, either. They may be getting on in years now, or they may have faded away altogether. I have lost touch with the area.

The other week the BBC televised a classic case of what I am talking about. Percy Toplis was birched at the age of 11, and finished up leading a mutiny in the Army and shooting at policemen when he emerged from it.

Caning is no deterrent. It hammers revenge into men's bodies and burning iron into their souls. They want to make society pay for the indignity and humiliation that is meted out to them.

Mr. Hawksley: Will the hon. Gentleman concentrate on the figures from the Isle of Man, which are relevant? Corporal punishment is used there, and those caned up to 1982 show a recidivist rate of 28 per cent. In this country, the rate is 75 per cent. Why?

Mr. Ashton: The hon. Gentleman is talking about an isolated place that does not suffer from the problems of our inner cities—problems such as homelessness and the absence of a stepladder to better things. Crime went down in the 1950s and 1960s. The incidents that I have described occurred before the war—I was only seven at the time of the blitz. Now, as in the 1930s, people at the bottom are becoming full of despair. There is no stepladder, no hope and no future. People do not expect to jump to the top of the stepladder, but a big strong lad bursting with muscles wants to use his strength in a job.

There was no crime in 1950s and 1960s — [HON. MEMBERS: "None?"] Practically none, because lads left school and went down the pit, into the steelworks or the shipyards, or down to the docks—to Bermondsey—to unload sacks of potatoes for £100 a week. When they came home they were too tired to do anything but have three pints in the pub and go to bed. There was no football hooliganism then, because there were other outlets for their energy—conscription, for example. People played more organised sport and the jobs were physically demanding.

Many of us who worked on the shop floor or in the pits can tell Conservative Members that we went home, had our tea and fell asleep on the settee. We were so tired that we slept for an hour before having a couple of pints. We started work at 6 am and were too tired to go out at 11 pm to a disco to play reggae music and keep the street awake until all hours of the morning.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will the hon. Gentleman please address himself to what is indisputably the major problem of crime in this country—those who are under 15 years old? How will he deal with them? Does he not think that this type of punishment will make them understand that the physical pain that is inflicted on them corresponds to the physical pain that they have given others?

Mr. Ashton: I accept the hon. Gentleman's statistics, but he is discussing petty crime—stealing milk money.

Mr. John Carlisle: Come on!

Mr. Ashton: The hon. Gentleman is referring to children who go to supermarkets, grab something and run out — [HON. MEMBERS: "What about mugging?"] A youngster of 14 is not big enough to mug someone. It is a matter of petty theft. Children on their way to a football match run into a supermarket and pinch a bottle of sherry. They drink two mouthfuls of it and start acting like hooligans. That is not the sort of heavy crime that we are discussing.

The whole history of punishment, going back to the mutiny on the Bounty, on which vessel British seamen were flogged and mistreated, shows that the worse criminals are treated physically, the worse they will react. Hon. Members should consider what happens when children are battered. They will invariably find that those children's parents were battered themselves. In every case involving battered children, the parents' history shows that they were battered as kids. Often their grandparents, and their parents before them, were battered, too. That is the result of physical punishment, handed down from generation to generation. It does not eradicate, prevent or stop anything. It puts physical violence into a person, and that must come out somewhere else.

Mr. John Carlisle: Fear. That is the deterrent.

Mr. Ashton: It is not fear. The deterrent is being caught. Any criminal who knows that it is a cast-iron certainty that he will be caught will not commit the crime. Paying the rates is a perfect example of that. People do not dodge them, because they will be caught. If they do not pay them, they will end up in court. They cannot shift the house and run away, so they pay.

With rape it is different. Only one in three rapes ever gets reported. The criminal sees from the papers that women are scared and do not want to go through the hassle. They do not report the rape, so the rapist reckons that there is a two in three chance that the rape will not be reported, and he takes the risk. The deterrent is the absolute certainty of being caught. That is why the number of bank robberies went down in recent years.

Mr. Lawrence: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will say what on earth is the deterrent for a young person who is caught if, having been caught, he is not to be punished.

6 pm

Mr. Ashton: There is a punishment, a great deal of punishment, for young people, and it is not to make them heroes. All too often they would wear these stripes while strutting around with their mates. We have seen them at football matches, as we saw it on the picket lines and everywhere else. If there is a television camera, it enhances the status of the idiot who runs on the field, or takes a punch at someone, or knocks a bobby's helmet off. This sort of punishment would give him a status too. He would parade his stripes to the rest of the kids and he would be the macho hero who took the knocks, the lumps and the stripes awarded to him. The punishment would do the reverse of what hon. Members intend.

Mr. Soley: I do not believe that anyone of a mature and balanced disposition and who has read the wording of this new clause would vote for it. It talks of people who "make use of provoking language or behaviour tending to a breach of the peace".

If they are under 10 they will be caned—"whipped" is the word, "with a cane"—and if they are 14 they will be whipped with a birch. I put it to Government Members who have been talking about this that they would not do it to their own children. If they tried to do it to their own children, their own children would be likely to be taken into care because they would have failed as parents—and every one of us knows this.

These hon. Members do not support the new clause with any intention of voting for it. They are doing so, knowing that they are going to withdraw it, because they want to get their names in their local papers and pretend that they are getting tough on crime. I challenge any Government Member. They can prove me wrong by calling for a vote and putting the tellers in. I will wait until the time comes to see if they do.

One thing that a number of my hon. Friends have made clear—some Government Members believe this too—is that violence begets violence. I have worked with an awful lot of very violent people in my time——

Mr. Bruinvels: Labour voters.

Mr. Soley: If I had to break down how they voted, I would have to say that a goodly number of them voted for extreme Right-wing parties like the Conservatives and the National Front.

One thing that I can say with absolute certainty is that of all those people only a tiny handful did not have violence used against them as children. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) is absolutely right to talk about the parents of battered children, because we usually find that one parent or both have also been battered.

The only bit of hope that the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) could bring up was the experience of the Isle of Man. We all know that crime is low in the Isle of Man because it does not have, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said, that splintered, disintegrated community that we have in most of Britain but primarily in the inner cities. This is what has driven up the crime rate. The reason why the crime rate has risen faster under this Government than under any previous one is precisely because they have done more to rip apart the fabric of society and undermine family relationships than any previous Government by means of the general pressure that they put on people, particularly those on a low income. It is no wonder that the crime rate is going up in those families and communities which have collapsed.

The hon. Gentleman quoted figures for the Isle of Man. He forgets to say that many people birched and caned there did not come from the Isle of Man. The figures are not comparable. It is no good using the absurd argument that they do not go back, because research shows that such offenders would not necessarily have gone back anyway, if given another type of sentence. Those who are fined, for example, in the Isle of Man do not particularly go back either. So the recidivism rate in the Isle of Man tells us nothing.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw said with clarity and force, the thing that deters crime is the chance of being convicted. What we are talking about in this new clause is things like criminal damage. Children are going to be whipped for criminal damage, for scrawling a slogan

[Mr. Soley]

on a wall. That is what we are talking about. We are actually talking about a clear-up rate which is tiny, because the vast majority of people who commit such offences are not caught. So to talk about any type of sentence as a deterrent is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Soley: Government Members should remember something else. Not only would they not do it to their own children, but they must ask why it is that a normal healthy adult wants to do this only to a child. Hon. Members will see that adult males are not included, so this will be done only to children. Interestingly, it will not be done to women—it has to be a male child. That tells us a great deal about the psychology of those who wrote this clause, with its careful definition of the length of cane:

"Length from end of handle to tip of spray 40 inches . . . Length of handle 15 inches . . . Circumference of spray at centre 6 inches".

Who on earth worked this out? It is a sign of people who have not come to terms with their own problems. They need to think about that very carefully if they are to pursue the matter further.

I have already said that Government Members will not push this new clause to a vote. If they do, it will be for one reason—to be able to stand up in their own areas and say that they voted for toughness. Of course, the message that their Government were elected on has failed. Their tough law and order policies have not worked because they have destroyed the very fabric of the communities, the family structures and links within families that prevent crime. In so doing, they and they alone bear the responsibility for the most dramatic increase in crime of all time.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): We on the Government Benches have endeavoured for many years to correct this trouble with law and order.

Mr. Lofthouse: It is getting worse.

Mr. Dickens: Yes, it is getting worse. We wish to see a country in which women can walk freely without the fear of being molested or raped. We wish to see a country where the elderly can feel safe inside their own homes and out after dark. We also want to see a country where our children can play safely without fear of being abused or killed. That is the sort of vision that we have. This is the sort of thing that we have worked towards.

The provisions of this new clause have no great appeal for me, but I must say that Opposition Members have been most unhelpful about other forms of correction that we have put forward, in terms of sentencing powers and provisions under the law. Many of our judges, too, live in a different world. Parliament sets the sentences, but the judges often fail to award them. By the time our judges have read medical reports, psychiatric reports, social reports, probation reports, they look at them and, like the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), they say, "Poor devils, never had a chance in life." They do not think about the victim and the victim's family.

This is what we are ignoring. It is very hard for a political party which believes in law and order, which fixes the tariff for sentences and the rest, to be undermined in many ways not only by the judiciary but also on many occasions by Opposition Members who do not seem to vote for things that we would wish to put in place to correct the law and order situation. Time and time again we are frustrated.

If the new clause were put to the vote, I would not vote for it. As it happens, I am not one of the "hang 'em, flog 'em, whip 'em" brigade, but tomorrow I shall be voting for the reintroduction of capital punishment. Let me explain.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think it might be for the convenience of the House if the hon. Gentleman sought to do that tomorrow.

Mr. Dickens: Let me explain about the matter that we are discussing at the moment. What are we talking about? We are talking about deterrents.

Ms. Clare Short: Beating is not a deterrent.

Mr. Dickens: Beating is a deterrent.

Ms. Clare Short: How does the hon. Member know?

Mr. Dickens: If I had a whip, I would show the hon. Lady. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker; we are digressing.

I think deeply and sincerely about the protection of the citizen. It is the state's duty to protect its citizens. We are not protecting the citizen sufficiently. The proposed new clause is a typical example of the feeling that we have not come to grips with the problem of law and order. People want extreme measures because they are frightened. We are not winning the war on law and order. Try as we will, we are not, and we are getting precious little help, or none at all, from the Opposition.

We must work towards stability on law and order. We must not let the criminal get on top of us. We must think more about the victims and the relatives of victims than about the defendant standing in the dock. We must apply the strength of law and order to the criminal as we do in defence. We say that we must be strong on defence. The balance of terror is the strength in defence that has kept peace for 40 years. We must show the same strength and the same tenacity when we deal with criminals otherwise there will be extremisms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The House is grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Hawksley) for allowing us to debate a matter which has proved to be of considerable interest. Despite the fact that he made a speech which was both eloquent and persuasive and the fact that he was supported by many of my hon. Friends, I cannot commend the new clause to the House. When I adopt that position, I do so both on general grounds of principle and on grounds of detail.

I should like first to deal with the general grounds, which are grounds of principle. We must understand the scope of what is proposed in the new clause. It proposes that all courts, including magistrates courts, should, in respect of offenders between the ages 10 and 18, have the power to impose a birching order for a wide range of offences. Leaving aside assault, for which there is a possible argument, the offences are making use

"of provoking language or behaviour tending to a breach of the peace".

Should those offences attract a birching order?

Not since 1847 have justices had the power to impose a birching order in respect of persons over 14; not since 1861 has a higher court had the power to impose a birching order for offences of the kind now defined in respect of

persons under the age of 14. I am very sceptical about a proposal which is designed to reinstate a legal system which went out of fashion in the days of Lord Palmerston, 150 years ago. That is the premise from which I start—extreme scepticism.

6.15 pm

Now we come to the question of deterrence. It was right that my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin should concentrate on deterrence. I must tell my hon. Friends that all the examination into this matter that has been undertaken does not disclose any evidence of deterrence; indeed, quite the reverse. For example, the matter was examined by the Cadogan committee in 1938. I quote a summary of that:

"They"—

that is, the Cadogan committee—

"examined the records of 440 men convicted between 1921 and 1930 of robbery with violence, and compared the subsequent records of those who were flogged with the records of those who were not. They concluded that sentences of imprisonment or penal servitude without flogging were no less effective in deterring offenders from subsequent offences of robbery with violence than sentences of imprisonment or penal servitude with flogging. As regards subsequent crimes other than robbery with violence, they found that those who had been flogged, including those without previous convictions of serious crime, had worse subsequent records than those not flogged."

Just in case someone thinks that there was something peculiar about the period between 1921 and 1930, let me tell the House of a further analysis that was undertaken in respect of the period between 1941 and 1948. The whole question was considered again in 1960 by the Advisory Council on the Treatment of Offenders. It considered the subsequent convictions of men under 21 who had been convicted between 1941 and 1948 of robbery with violence, armed robbery or robbery in company. Of 704 offenders in this group, 125, or 18 per cent., received corporal punishment; 579, or 82 per cent., did not. The proportion convicted of further offences of violence was 18·4 per cent. for those who had been flogged and 12·4 per cent. for those who had not been flogged.

Mr. John Carlisle: The statistics that my hon. Friend has given related to men under 21. Can he enlighten us on whether there are figures for those under 15? Half the crimes that we have been talking about have been committed by children of that age. My hon. Friend is talking about mature adults. He is also talking about a report relating to the period before 1960. Does he agree that since 1960 the rise in crime has been horrific and that the crimes committed, particularly by youngsters under 15, have been equally horrific?

Mr. Hogg: No. My hon. Friend is over-refining the matter. I have quoted from two authoritative reports made to the House. I say to my hon. Friends, who have spoken about the Isle of Man that during the whole of the 1970s only five juveniles and six adults were flogged there. Between 1973 and 1978 no juvenile was flogged. To try to extrapolate lessons from that is simply not a helpful exercise.

I say with no apology that all the evidence shows unequivocally that flogging is not a deterrent for any offence. It would constitute a breach of article 3 of the European convention, and I do not choose to commit a breach of that convention. Furthermore, it would constitute a breach of article 7 of the United Nations covenant on civil and political rights. Again, I do not care to advocate such a breach.

One thing we must understand on this matter of principle is that people in this country and in this House feel a deep revulsion against the proposal. If we introduce it, I fear that it will bring the whole corpus of criminal law into disrepute.

Those are matters of principle, but I have not finished yet as there are matters of detail to consider.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): They are all behind the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hogg: I am delighted to hear that all my hon. Friends are behind me.

I was about to consider the detail, because we cannot ignore detail on such an issue. The idea that there can be a rapid penalty swiftly following the commission of an offence, is an absurdity. Anyone who knows anything about criminal courts will know that weeks, if not months, pass between the commission of the offence and the imposition of a penalty.

My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin requires in his new clause the presence of a doctor. That is understandable, but the entire British Medical Association is against it. In all probability, it would be unethical for a doctor to attend the carrying out of such a penalty.

Then there is the question of the police officer. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) made an important and telling point when he said that a police officer would not choose to be in any way tarnished with the imposition of such an act. My hon. Friend is right because, as a matter of principle and for long past, the House has been clear about the role of a police officer, who is not involved in the imposition of a penalty. It would be intolerable for the police to have to play such a role in our criminal system.

Despite the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin and of those who have supported him—and I speak quite as passionately as them—I am against the new clause and I hope that it will not receive a Second reading.

Mr. Hawksley: I wish to reply to a few of the points made in the debate. It has been a good debate and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing it to take place.

As I said earlier, I believe that new clause 3 is desirable, although I was interested to hear the comments from the Opposition which I did not find so surprising. However, I wish to pick up one point made by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) who mentioned "The Monocled Mutineer". I received a report that the author admitted on a BBC Radio 4 programme that the story had been created from his imagination and that it was in the interests of pacifism. That suggests that the evidence from the Opposition is not very strong.

The main argument against the new clause has been its wording. I stressed at the start that I drew my wording entirely from the Isle of Man legislation. I accept that if the new clause were accepted in principle it would need amending in another place. The problem raised by my hon. Friend the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), concerning police officers and doctors could be corrected. After we discussed

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the matter, when the BMA made it clear that it would not support such a proposal, I received a string of letters from doctors offering to officiate at such occasions.

The important point that we have missed is the matter of principle—whether corporal punishment would be a deterrent. Earlier, I quoted the figures relating to the recidivist rate on the Isle of Man. I believe they confirm that corporal punishment would be a deterrent. I believe that the electorate are looking to us to introduce such a deterrent. They believe that we should think about the victim more than the person who has committed the crime. For that reason, I leave it to the House to decide whether it wishes to agree to the new clause.

Mr. Speaker: The question is, That the clause be read a Second time. As many as are of that opinion say Aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Of the contrary No.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the Noes have it.
Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Soley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure whether the new clause is being forced to a Division.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that I have collected the voices, and my judgment was not challenged in that respect.

New Clause 5

DIRECTOR'S POWERS (INSIDER DEALING)

'(1) The powers of the Director of the Serious Fraud Office under section 2 of this Act shall be exercisable in any case in which it appears to him that there is good reason to do so for the purpose of investigating the affairs or any aspect of the affairs of the futures market.

(2) For the purposes of this section "Futures Market" means any market, the prices of which are published, enabling persons or undertakings to make forward dealings in physical or financial commodities, assets, or currencies.'. — *[Mr. Soley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Soley: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

We have now reached a serious part of the Bill that deals with fraud. The new clause seeks to deal with insider dealing on the futures market. We hope to close some of the opportunities for fraud that are available in the City of London and other areas of the country.

The Bill introduces a new concept—a concept that is welcomed on both sides of the House—of the serious fraud office. A number of Acts designed to deal with insider dealing have not been as effective as they should have been. The Companies Securities (Insider Dealings) Act 1985 and the Financial Services Act 1986 have not dealt fully with insider dealings. A strong view is still held in society that it is easy to get away with major fraud and that, somehow or another, it is allowed to happen and not too much effort is being made to prevent it.

The Government have taken a significant step in the right direction by establishing the serious fraud office. However, having listened to the previous debate, I should have thought that every member of the Tory party would support not only the deterrent aspect of punishment for fraud but, more important, the introduction of a major new measure to catch fraudsters, to ensure that they do not get away with what are often millions of pounds worth of money which belong to other people. As has often been said, fraud has become a regressive tax on society, and it takes money out of the pockets of particular individuals and groups.

We must consider double standards in this connection. In 1986 there were no fewer than 138,000 prosecutions for fraud against people on supplementary benefit, yet in the City of London in 1984 there were only 77 arrests and only 18 prosecutions. It seems that far greater resources are used to catch people who defraud social security, when a far smaller amount of money is involved, than are used to catch major fraud when the amounts are much greater — running into thousands or millions of pounds on some occasions.

There is also some evidence of friction between the police and the Department of Trade and Industry in investigations. I hope that the establishment of the serious fraud office will eventually help to reduce that.

We also acknowledge that, in Committee, the Government increased the sentence for fraud from two years to seven years. But an increase in sentence is not a deterrent unless one is caught. Conservative Members mistakenly believe that one can deal with crime by increasing the length of sentences. That is dependent not only on the state of desperation of people who commit crime but on the chances of getting away with crime. The chances of getting away with major fraud crimes are considerable. The Securities and Investments Board and DTI figures show that since 1980 only 110 cases were reported, and of those only nine were prosecuted. They were largely small-fry cases.

The purpose of the new clause is to incorporate the futures market. The example that I am about to describe is the one about which I have most evidence, although there are other cases in which there may be similar problems.

6.30 pm

The potato futures market is a fairly recent operation. It commenced trading in 1980. It was modelled on the Dutch example. There is a significant and vital difference between the British and Dutch potato futures markets. The Dutch futures market involves totally free enterprise industries whose futures react to natural fluctuations of supply and demand, and they have no central system of state aid affecting trade. But in the United Kingdom potato production is controlled by the potato marketing scheme and the Potato Marketing Board. In effect, the Potato Marketing Board moves on market support, quotas, grading and other matters of that nature. That produces an immediate effect on the futures market. The Potato Marketing Board's process of continually collating statistics from growers, customers, and Customs and Excise and releasing monthly forecasts provides the information on which people can base insider trading.

Prior to the monthly information releases, Potato Marketing Board members and staff are in a privileged position. As they prepare the forecasts, they can at once predict how the potato futures market will react, and trade accordingly either on their own accounts or through friends or relatives. On various occasions, there have been

press reports of dips or rises in prices immediately prior to the board's monthly statistical releases. The problem is a real one.

I shall quote from an article in the 16 September 1982 issue of *Big Farm Weekly*. That may sound an unlikely name in a Home Affairs debate—it might sound more at home in an agriculture debate—but it underlines the important and serious point. It states:

"Potato Marketing Board members have been accused by traders of insider trading on the potato futures market—which, though not actually illegal in commodity markets, is regarded in commercial circles as a heinous offence.

The simple fact is that Potato Marketing Board members and staff often have access to figures on plantings, supplies and yields well before that information is released to the general public. Obviously it is possible to trade on the basis of this information.

Of all the soft commodity markets operating in this country the potato futures market is unique in that it is the only one where one organisation has a virtual monopoly on supply information.

Insider trading is now illegal in stocks and shares as well as being banned under the Stock Exchange regulations. At the same time all futures market traders have a clause written into their contracts of employment forbidding them to trade for themselves. However, no such restrictions apply to individuals—whether they be in a position of privilege or not—in trading on either the physical commodity or the futures markets.

Futures traders see this lack of constraint—particularly in the potato market — as iniquitous. As one trader succinctly put: 'If I tried trading off my own account and was caught at it I wouldn't even touch the sides of the door on my way out, and I wouldn't be able to get a job with any of the other companies.'

For their part, the traders fear that the market will lose credibility if insider trading becomes rife, and public knowledge, and they therefore lose business."

In 1982, an editorial in the *Farmers Weekly* stated:

"The potatoe futures market is a well established institution. It is widely used by merchants, processors and farmers to hedge against market movements and, as such, provides extra confidence to those who need to operate long-term contracts. It must, therefore, retain a spotless reputation."

In 1982, there was an awareness in agricultural markets and circles that insider trading on futures of this type was a problem. The rumours suggested behaviour which could be construed as illegal, and would certainly have been construed as unacceptable. The editorial in the *Farmers Weekly* continued:

"The board's prompt rejection of the current crop of rumours is timely. It will ease minds and cement confidence.

But perhaps a change in the law, with the extension of the ban on insider trading to include futures markets as well as the stock market, would be the best way to stop rumour mongers in their tracks."

Clearly, at that stage, the *Farmers Weekly* took the view that, although it was a rumour, the rumour, rather than the issue, was the problem. We now have further evidence that it is more serious than that.

Two years later, on 17 February 1984, *Farmers Weekly* published a news item headed:

"Hunt for 'mole' at Potato Board HQ."

That is a suitable title, one might think, in the circumstances. The article states:

"A telephone call to *Farmers Weekly* from a since-untraceable potato merchant claiming to have the figures and asking whether the board had issued a comment on them, alerted us to the fact that the figures were in someone's hands.

An inquiry into the futures market proved that at least one floor trader also had the figures and had traded on them.

That floor trader claimed his client had the information by Wednesday morning direct from an inside PMB source.

While refusing to disclose the name of the client, the futures floor trader said he was a farmer in the Sussex-Hampstead area."

Even though so-called insider trading is not actually illegal in the commodities market, the leaking of confidential information of that type is regarded by board chiefs as an abuse of a privileged position. Although it might seem unusual, in referring to the futures market in potatoes, we need to recognise that we are talking about a large and lucrative market in which price fluctuations can lead to large gains if one is able effectively to predict prices, in exactly the same way as applies to stocks and shares.

The argument that we put to the Government is that insider dealing on the futures market is as important in principle and probably, in certain cases, as important as the amount of money involved, as insider dealing in stocks and shares. That is why we put forward new clause 5 as an important new step in the Bill.

An article in the 27 January 1984 issue of *Farming News* states:

"The announcement, made by telex"—

that is, dealing with the prices and the consumption rate between June and November—

"detailed a sharp fall in stocks and a rise in consumption, trends which were likely to lead to a rise in the price of potato futures.

Anyone in possession of such price-sensitive information ahead of the official announcement would be in a good position to trade profitably.

And this, in fact, is what would seem to have happened."

The official announcement, made after the close of business the next day, Tuesday January 17, showed an 899,000-tonne fall in stocks and a 20,000-tonne increase in consumption over the same month a year earlier.

The following morning, the market reacted to the announcement. Prices soared by more than £9 a tonne and 575 lots totalling 23,000 tonnes of potatoes were traded.

That is evidence of a serious abuse of privileged information which could lead to people making significant sums of money in a way which is unacceptable in the normal behaviour of the futures market and those legally involved in it, and, as I have said already, it would be illegal in dealings in stocks and shares on the stock market.

The same magazine has a section called "Big Farm Diary", which says:

"Potato Board chairman Geoffrey Grantham and his colleagues refuse to be impressed by the argument that they ought to be debarred from trading on the London futures market because their inside knowledge gives them an unfair advantage over others. They challenged critics to produce firm evidence of 'insider' trading by Board members."

That is a fair point. The article went on:

"Meanwhile, the Board is sticking to its policy of releasing market-sensitive information to all concerned as soon as it comes to hand—so that Board members can't be accused of taking advantage of prior knowledge. Mr. Grantham and his colleagues appear to be satisfied that this is a sufficient answer. At a very friendly PMB lunch for journalists in London last week, some of us among the guests ungraciously raised this sensitive point over the brandy. The urbane Mr. Grantham was no more put out by this than he is by rebellious interventions at this AGM. As he sees it, the Board members who are using the futures market are the ones who have got their buttons on—so why bring in a ruling which would deprive producers of their valuable services?"

Again, Mr. Speaker, I remind you that this is a matter of considerable sums of money involving acts which would be illegal if carried out on the stock exchange in any way.

The wording of the new clause will allow the new serious fraud office to investigate on its own initiative. It is a way of legislating to make sure that the futures market,

[Mr. Soley]

not just in potatoes but in a number of cereals and other areas as well, could be brought under the auspices of the SFO.

If the Government are serious in their intentions, as I know they are, to do something about fraud, I hope that they will accept the new clause. It makes no major difference to the Bill's thrust. I have not created a new offence because to do so would have produced problems of bringing it into line with the way in which the Bill is presently worded.

The new clause simply makes clear that the SFO can and should investigate such matters because the evidence is that insider trading is taking place on the futures market. That is not just a persistent rumour, which, as I have demonstrated, has been around since 1982, but a considerable suggestion that that activity is not only known about but frowned upon by many people who are themselves involved and do not like such activities. But, more importantly, it is, as I have already said, a criminal offence if carried out in stocks and shares on the stock exchange. It is unacceptable that we should make insider dealing in stocks and shares an illegal, criminal offence of fraud without involving the futures market.

Mr. Mellor: I have listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). I think he readily understands that the difficulty that lies in the way of our accepting the new clause is precisely, as he said towards the end of his speech, why he is not making insider dealing on the futures market a criminal offence. At the moment, other than securities, the futures market will be regulated when the Financial Services Act 1986 comes into force, but insider dealing is not at this stage a criminal offence.

The position of the serious fraud office on the sort of issues that the hon. Gentleman mentioned can be summed up by saying that if they involve serious fraud, the director of the SFO will be able to instigate an investigation, but not otherwise. It is perfectly proper that that should be so, and if the new clause were to be accepted he would be investigating matters that might not be a criminal offence.

Obviously, I cannot help the hon. Gentleman with the particular case that he raised, nor would he expect me to, but I understand that the Association of Future Brokers and Dealers hopes to become the recognised self-regulating organisation for investment business in futures and options under the Financial Services Act. Whether insider dealing in other items traded on the futures market should be made a criminal offence is kept under review, but the Department of Trade and Industry considers that the futures market falls more properly within the framework of regulation than the criminal process.

It is the key aim of the Financial Services Act to establish a regulatory regime to cover those dealings in futures which are made for investment services purposes or traded on an investment exchange recognised under the Act. The Secretary of State has powers to investigate investment businesses under the Act, and those powers will be brought into force later this year. Therefore, as the hon. Gentleman concedes, we are set on a major effort against fraud. The creation of the SFO and the powers that it has been given under the Bill will be major step forward in that respect.

6.45 pm

The hon. Gentleman has created a one-winged aircraft with the new clause. There is no proposal, nor at this stage should there be, to widen the scope of the insider dealing offence to cover the areas that he has in mind. That being so, the director of the SFO would not be serving any useful purpose in mounting an investigation that was not related to a serious or complex fraud, but if a serious or complex fraud were to arise it would be within the powers of the SFO to mount that investigation. However, as I say, these matters are kept under review and there will no doubt be an opportunity to return to them.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): If fraud were involved, there could be a prosecution under an applicable provision of the criminal law. The Opposition's point is rather foolish, because there is no specific need to have an SFO to deal with frauds which happen to occur in the context which the Opposition put forward. I was a member of the Financial Services Bill Committee, and although I am sure that all that will be helpful in due course, it does not mean that without it people cannot be prosecuted for fraud.

Mr. Mellor: I hope that I made that point abundantly clear. If there is serious fraud in the futures market, as in any other market, the SFO can investigate. The new clause appears to invite an investigation unrelated to an existing criminal offence. Where there is a criminal offence, as my hon. Friend says, if the director of the SFO considers it to be a serious and complex fraud, he can investigate it.

I hope that the hon. Member for Hammersmith does not think that I am giving him the brush-off. I certainly do not intend to do that. However, the only way in which the new clause would work is if a decision were taken to make insider dealing in commodities a criminal offence. As the hon. Gentleman knows, at the moment it is a criminal offence only in relation to company securities under the Company Securities (Insider Dealings) Act 1985. Any further action will have to wait on the need, which does not yet arise, to make a wider provision. At the moment, I would prefer to place my trust in the arrangements that have been entered into under the Financial Services Act. Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman, having given his new clause a considerable airing, will see fit to withdraw it.

Mr. Soley: I am far from happy to hear the Minister say that he recognises the need for internal regulation but not the need to create a criminal offence. That is undesirable, particularly in view of the evidence that I have produced of a continuing concern within the particular market to which I have been referring over a number of years—five years at least.

I recognise that the drafting of the new clause is not perfect, but I would have been much happier if the Minister had said that this is a serious matter, that the Government regard fraud on the stock exchange as a serious matter and that, therefore, insider dealing of this type should also be a serious criminal offence.

I come back to what I said in my opening comments about the dangers of the double standards which the Government impose in investigating fraud of one type as compared with another. We know that major efforts are made, and virtually no public expense is spared, to catch those who defraud on supplementary benefit. I make no complaint about the need to deal with such fraud, but it is a gross double standard to put enormous resources into

doing that and then to rely on internal regulation to deal with offences which, if committed with stocks and shares, could lead to up to seven years imprisonment under the Bill as it is now drafted and two years under the Bill in its previous form.

We should not encourage such a double standard. If we do not vote on the new clause, we shall be sending out a message to the country that, although we consider fraud in relation to such matters as supplementary benefit serious enough to imprison many people for it, we regard this type of fraud—which may involve many thousands, or, in the case of the stock exchange, millions of pounds—as far less serious. We have not thought through the consequences of the legislation to include such matters as the futures market.

Unless the Minister is prepared to tell me that he will consider the new clause and come back with a provision in the Bill to make such fraud an offence, we shall ask for a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:——

The House divided: Ayes 170, Noes 245.

Division No. 129] **[6.55 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Monig'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan

Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mariand, Paul
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 6

EVIDENCE BY CHILDREN IN RELATION TO CERTAIN OFFENCES

'(1) In any proceedings a video recorded interview with a witness under the age of 14 (other than the accused) shall be admissible as evidence of any fact of which direct oral evidence by him would be admissible as if made under section 38(i) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

This section applies—

(a) to an offence which involves an assault on, or injury or a threat of injury to, any person, or the death of any person; or

(b) to a sexual offence; or

(c) to an offence which consists of attempting or conspiring to commit, or of aiding, abetting, counselling, procuring or inciting the commission of, an offence falling within paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* above.

(3) In this section "sexual offence" means an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, the Indecency with Children Act 1960, the Sexual Offences Act 1967, section 54 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 or the Protection of Children Act 1978.

(4) The Secretary of State shall make rules to provide—

(a) that the interview shall be made as soon as is practicable after the alleged offence;

(b) that the video recording of the interview is complete and accurate and has nothing added, omitted or altered; an edited copy of the video recording may be used with the consent of both prosecution and defence;

(c) the interview shall be carried out by a fit person acceptable to the court.

(5) Before a video recording is used in evidence against any accused person he and or his legal representatives shall have the right to inspect and view it.

(6) Nothing in this section shall affect the right of cross-examination at the hearing by or on behalf of the party against whom the child gives evidence.

(7) Nothing in this section affects the rights of a judge to withdraw the case from the jury, or the duty of the judge to warn the jury of the danger of convicting uncorrobated evidence.

(8) Crown Court rules and rules made in accordance with provision of the Magistrates Court Act 1980 may be made for the purposes of this section.'.—*[Mrs. Golding.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 7—*Use of live video links for remand proceedings*—

'(1) Where the accused is remanded in custody prior to committal proceedings under sections 5 and 10 of the Magistrates Court Act 1980, it shall be possible to hold "remand proceedings" by means of a live video link where all parties agree.

(2) The court may give leave under subsection (1) above only if it is satisfied that the video link allows evidence to be given in a way which allows persons concerned in the case to see, hear and communicate with the accused.

(3) Nothing in this section shall affect the right of the accused to appear in person at remand proceedings.'.

New clause 8—*Evidence by children in relation to certain offences by use of live video links*—

"(1) A witness under 14 (other than the accused) may give evidence through a live video link in proceedings before a Crown Court on a trial on indictment where the offence is one charged in subsection (2) below. Such evidence may not be given without leave of the court.

(2) This section applies—

(a) to an offence which involves an assault on, or injury or a threat of injury to, any person; or

(b) to a sexual offence; and

(c) to an offence which consists of attempting or conspiring to commit, or of aiding, abetting counselling, procuring or inciting the commission of, an offence falling within paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* above.

(3) In this section—

"sexual offence" means an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, the Indecency with Children Act 1980, the Sexual Offences Act 1967, section 54 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 or the Protection of Children Act 1978.

(4) Where the court consider it necessary it may if it so wishes allow the questioning of the child to be conducted through a fit person other than the prosecution and defence counsel.

(5) The court may only give leave under subsection (1) above if it is satisfied that the video link allows evidence to be given in a way which allows all persons concerned in the case to see, hear and communicate with the witness.".

Mrs. Golding: In moving new clause 6, I speak on behalf of young children in this country who are, or who have been, subjected to sexual abuse and violence. I speak also for those who are now adults but who have been scarred by the perverted desires of some men and women who abuse small children.

Our law has been described as a molesters' charter. Can any of us doubt that, when recent Childline statistics have spoken of up to 700 calls a day from children who need help? They are the young victims of violence and sexual abuse and they need the help of the law. They also need the help of this House. We must listen to them. We must no longer pretend that these young victims can be ignored by the law.

It does not bear thinking about that our own children, or grandchildren, might be the victims of child abusers who cannot be brought to trial. Why should we, as Members of Parliament, think that it is any easier for families in our constituencies when they see the law act in this foolish and uncaring way? Yes, we need to consider the accused and to protect their rights, but at what point does the molesters' charter consider the victim — the child?

The Bill certainly provides for the use of video evidence, but the Opposition believe that there is an overwhelming need for such an important provision — and the safeguards—to be clearly stated. As the Bill stands, that is not so. To that end, we have tried to take into account, when framing new clauses 6 and 8, all the objections that have been raised.

A video recording should be made as soon as practicable after an alleged offence. Nothing should be added; nothing should be omitted; and nothing should be altered. It should be made by a fit person—somebody who is acceptable to the court. Before it is used in evidence, the accused and their legal representatives should have the right to inspect and view the video recording. It would not affect the right to cross-examine at the hearing, or the right of the judge either to withdraw the case from the jury or to warn about uncorroborated evidence. A video recording is not a pre-trial hearing. It is a piece of evidence that is similar to any other evidence, and it is there to be either accepted or rejected by the jury.

It is important that the use of a live video link should be understood. The child will be in another room, outside the court, and will be accompanied by somebody who is acceptable to the court, such as a court attendant. The child will be able to see only the person who is speaking to him or to her—that is, one person at a time, be it the judge, or defence counsel or prosecution counsel. The child will be unable to see the accused or anybody else in the court who might be able to influence his or her evidence.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The whole country is united in its abhorrence of this type of crime, but may I put a practical point to the hon. Lady that she ought to consider? I say this as one who has experience of the criminal courts in this country.

We agree with what the hon. Lady is trying to achieve, but her proposal may result in more acquittals of defendants. Counsel for the defendant would be able to say to the jury at the end of a trial that less weight should be given to the child's evidence because it had not been tested in open court. I think that the hon. Lady should address that difficult problem.

Mrs. Golding: I thank the hon. Gentleman. As I make progress with my speech, I think that he will see that we have considered that problem.

With a live video link, everybody in the court would be able to see the child and watch the child's face on the television screen. In video-link evidence, a court may, when it thinks fit under the terms of the new clause, allow the question to be put

"through a fit person other than the prosecution or defence counsels."

That would be useful where very young children are involved who may have great difficulty in communicating.

Will video recordings and live video links increase the chance of wrongful convictions? I do not believe that they will. In seeking to find the truth, while protecting a child from undue influence, we are also seeking to guard the accused against wrongful conviction. A growing tide of people are no longer prepared to accept the law as it stands, and want to see it changed on this issue. I have received many telephone calls and letters of support. These have come from such organisations as the National Children's Bureau, the Police Federation, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Royal College of Nursing, from doctors, nurses, barristers, teachers, playgroup organisers and many people in all walks of life. Indeed, yesterday I received a telephone call from a group of women in Belfast who told me that they were about to go around the estate to collect a petition.

The usefulness of the provision of video recordings cannot be questioned. The Texas police on the BBC programme "Panorama" said that of 235 accused facing video evidence, 221 pleaded guilty after watching the video recording. That meant that 221 children were spared the ordeal of a court appearance and that the offenders could be identified and offered psychiatric help, which is very important when we consider that many of these offenders are often part of the same family.

With all this concern, will the Minister give the House some assurance that there will be specific provisions in the Bill about video recording? If he is not prepared to accept the new clause, he should tell the House where the proposals fall short of the Government's requirements. If

[Mrs. Golding]

he will not make provision in the Bill, he should tell the House that the Government are not prepared to help those children who so desperately need our help.

New clause 7 deals with the

"Use of live video links for remand proceedings."

The clause allows further use of the video system and allows it to be more cost-effective, with the saving of police and court time. I hope that the Government will consider the proposals, for which I have received much support from members of the legal profession.

Mr. Mellor: As I know that many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, it might be helpful to the House if I explained the Government's position, so that those who speak subsequently will be able to do so knowing the context in which I believe the proposal should be viewed.

I want to begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on raising these issues, which I believe are of fundamental importance. I very much welcome the opportunity to debate these matters and hope that our discussions will have the widest currency, because I can think of few more useful tasks upon which Parliament can embark than considering this issue.

I want to set out what I believe would be the effect of the three new clauses. New clause 6 would allow statements made by a child under the age of 14 in a video-recorded interview to be admitted as evidence of the truth of their contents, where the child is a witness—either as a victim or otherwise—in a trial of a sexual offence or an offence of violence. The right of the accused to cross-examine the child at the trial would not be affected.

That is an important point in relation to the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) in his intervention. My hon. Friend was correct to point out that some of the proposals, notably that submitted by Professor Glanville Williams —at least in its first form—appeared to trench on the rights of cross-examination. I am not sure that Professor Williams holds that view any longer. However, new clause 6 does not affect the right of cross-examination, and that must be a major point in its favour.

New clause 7 does not relate to children and should properly be dealt with separately. It would allow remand hearings to be conducted by live video link, with the agreement of all parties. I believe that that is a most interesting idea. Plainly, there are technological and resource implications that do not allow me to accept the proposal tonight. However, the difficulties of bringing prisoners from prison to appear in court, could be solved if there was a video link. The time for that idea will come, but, alas, I cannot say that its time is tonight.

7.15 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The Minister has said that there are resource implications. However, in terms of the Treasury, are there not negative resource implications? The cost of installing the equipment will be gained many times over by the saving in the time of police and prison officers and, in addition, there will be a very important law and order saving because, as the Minister knows, a considerable amount of police time is taken up by police escorts for prisoners on remand.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to say that there would be what are known in the trade as "offsetting savings". Whether the costs would be totally or partially offset I do not know. Amidst the many other points that we have considered, this is not a point that we have had a chance fully to cost or discuss. It is an interesting idea which, I am sure, in due time cannot be denied. I am afraid that I cannot say that we can accept it this evening. However, I am sure that in due course exploratory work would have to be done.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will my hon. Friend contact the authorities in Texas? I have seen the video links operating with the consent of both parties in criminal and civil proceedings. That practice saves a lot of money.

Mr. Mellor: I am concerned that our criminal justice system should reflect the advantages that technology can apply. All too often, our criminal justice system appears to many people to be rooted in an altogether older and bygone age, important for some matters of principle but not so important — indeed, regrettable — in respect of some matters of practice. I would have no objection to the proposals in due course, but I must say—I do not mean this rudely — that new clause 7 is perhaps a trifle premature at this stage, although it is well worth airing.

New clause 8 reproduces those parts of clause 21 which deal with children's evidence by live video link. It is important that those who did not soldier through the three and a half months of Committee proceedings should understand that the Bill proposes a major innovation, that children should be able to give evidence via a live video link. That is a major step forward. Basically, new clause 8 reproduces clause 21 with the added provision in subsection (4) that the court should be able to

"allow the questioning of the child to be conducted through a fit person other than the prosecution and defence counsel."

It is not clear whether that would be with or without the agreement of the parties. It would introduce into law a novelty—namely, a person other than counsel for one side or the other.

Before making my detailed response, it may be helpful if I try to set the discussion in context by describing the real practical evidence that the Government have given of their concern to root out child abuse and ensure that the criminal justice system is responsive to the needs of children.

We looked carefully at the Criminal Law Revision Committee's report on the criminal law on sexual offences against children. That revealed no significant gaps, but recommended increases in penalties for certain offences. The Government assisted my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) to take through the House of Commons the Sexual Offences Act 1985, which increased the penalties for indecent assault on a young girl from five years to 10 years and for attempted rape from seven years to life. It is worth stressing that in 1985 there were about 300 rapes or attempted rapes of girls aged under 16. I hope that that Act significantly strengthened the ability of the courts to sentence appropriately in those cases.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), when Home Secretary, set out a policy, which my right hon. Friend the present Home Secretary has continued, that those sentenced to life imprisonment for the sexual or sadistic murder of children may expect to serve at least 20 years. I point out, from my

experience of handling life sentence cases for three and a half years in the Home Office, that some such offenders were released after 12 or 13 years under the old arrangements. Some such offenders will never be released, and I am confident that that meets with the approval of the whole House. Those sentenced to more than five years for crimes of violence—which include the sexual abuse of children—will not normally be paroled.

We must consider also, in due course, the laws of evidence which bear very much on video links. I hope that I am forgiven for pointing out that in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 important changes were made in the law of evidence to facilitate the routing out before a court of incidents of abuse, many of which take place behind closed doors and within the home and which therefore are some of the most difficult offences to bring to light. Section 80 (3) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 makes a wife or husband a compellable witness where the spouse is accused of a sexual or violent offence against someone under 16.

Those who love the law of evidence—I cannot claim to be one—know that it has some rather bizarre rules about whether one spouse can be compelled to give evidence against the other. We have entirely removed those rules from the scene. Often, in the case of abuse of a child within the home, the act will be committed by one adult and the only other adult in the home who can give evidence is likely to be the spouse. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), a battle-hardened veteran of the Standing Committee on that legislation, knows only too well that that was an important, although perhaps not the most commented on, point in the legislation.

It is worth pointing out that section 62(10) of the Act provides that, if an arrested person refuses without good cause to permit the police to take an intimate sample—say blood or semen—a court or jury may treat the refusal as corroboration of other evidence against the accused. That is important in relation to child sex abuse. Where the victim is too young to be sworn, his or her evidence must be corroborated, and section 62(10) provides a forensic basis for corroboration in certain cases.

The pilot project which the Metropolitan police are running in the London borough of Bexley is designed to ensure that youngsters, when they have a complaint to make about physical or sexual abuse, are taken to and interviewed in a hospital. When children are taken to a police station, they tend to associate that with a suggestion that they have done something wrong. The evidence is then taken by a specially trained person, who may or may not be a police officer. It is videoed to avoid the child having to go through the ordeal of making statements over and over to different people who need to know. That video can be shown — this is relevant to the Texas experience mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) — to the accused. The United States experience shows that, where video recordings of the complaint are shown to the accused while he is interviewed, it increases the likelihood of an admission that might prevent the ordeal of court appearances.

We have already said—I want to build on this later—that the Bexley experiment and other police practices are being collated by the chief inspector of constabulary with a view to our reviewing police procedures, with the aim of issuing a circular to chief officers that would mirror the successful circular on the treatment of rape victims which led to many more women being prepared to make complaints of rape. I am afraid that this has led to some lurid headlines in the newspapers which have asserted that the increased willingness of women to complain about rape means a substantially increased incidence of rape during the past few years. I do not believe that that is the case, but we must take it on the chin and try to improve our procedures. That is certainly our aim.

Ms. Clare Short: The Bexley experiment is impressive, but I am impatient about how soon we shall get such procedures throughout the country. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the procedures to be recommended in the circular on rape have not been implemented throughout the United Kingdom. When will the circular be issued? How much force can be put behind it? Will it be just a recommendation, or is there some guarantee that such changes will be implemented everywhere?

Mr. Mellor: I cannot give the hon. Lady a precise time scale, for reasons to which I shall come. We want to proceed with it. As the hon. Lady knows, one problem is that there are separate, autonomous police forces, accountable to their own police authority. Many argue, rightly, that that is an advantage, since it prevents the problems that many envisage in the creation of a national police force. But there is a downside to that—change is sometimes slow to come to some parts of the country. That must be accepted. The climate for interviewing rape victims has changed very much since the notorious television series a few years ago—which, paradoxically, did a great deal to wash out one or two practices which were not otherwise known to the public. This is a real step in the right direction.

Prevention is a crucial element in all this, because youngsters must be warned of the dangers which they can sometimes face if they accept the blandishments of a stranger to enter his car or to go off with him. That is why we are running a "Stranger Danger" campaign. Its aim is to increase the awareness of children, parents and teachers of the problems of child molestation, to get across a set of simple rules for children to follow and to alert parents and children to the need to ensure that children know and follow those rules.

One such scheme was successfully linked with the showing of "Peter Pan". Children who attended the cinema were issued with a document jointly sponsored by the Home Office and Walt Disney Productions on the never-never code, which sought to put across to children in a non-frightening way the points that they need to know for their safety.

Ms. Clare Short: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman twice, but I am worried about the "Stranger Danger" education programme. About 80 per cent. of child sex abuse occurs in the home or the neighbourhood where the child lives. If we teach our children that they are in danger only from strangers, we are not addressing the problem. We are not arming them with the ability to go to someone to complain and to feel confident that they will be cared for. Most children who are abused are terrified about complaining to anyone. That is part of the problem.

Mr. Mellor: Plainly, there are problems with the home, but that would not be a reason for us not acting against the particular problems the child faces from a molester. Some of the most notorious and repugnant cases have

[Mr. Mellor]

involved children being abducted or lured into cars by strangers. We must address all parts of the problem, one of which is certainly the threat from strangers.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am pleased to hear the Minister's sympathetic response to this social evil. Given that most attackers are men and that most victims of sexual abuse are young girls, does it not make sense to have more women police surgeons examining these victims outwith police stations?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point, but I wonder whether—I am not trying to evade this, because it is a significant point—he would bear with me for a few minutes, because that is the final point that I wish to raise. I have much sympathy for it.

We have also put into place a wide-ranging system which allows checks to be run on people employed by public authorities who will come into contact with children. This follows the relevation that one child murderer had worked as a baby sitter, notwithstanding the fact that he had a long record of sexual offences. We are closely considering with voluntary bodies extending that system to the voluntary sector. I hope that the House agrees that these are all major steps forward. This allows me to say, as more than an act of piety, that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I are very concerned about the problems of child abuse, not least because, as parents of young children, we know only too well how vulnerable young children are and how utterly monstrous and repugnant — among many monstrous and repugnant offences—offences against children are, whether within the home or outside it.

Therefore, we advise the House to accept the live video link as a major step forward, because it must be our aim to try to ensure that a child victim of physical or sexual abuse comes to the end of that dreadful experience when he or she complains to the authorities, and that the dreadful experiences do not continue after the complaint has been made. One of the worst of those experiences is to have to give evidence in a busy courtroom, in the presence of the offender. A child will often find that a wholly intimidating process. It is difficult to see how the system can allow a child to relax while requiring that child to go into such wholly alien surroundings. We hope that a live video link will remove the most acute aspects of that trauma.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*—

7.30 pm

Mr. Mellor: If I could finish my point, I shall give way to my hon. and learned Friend later.

Several important points of detail remain to be dealt with. Clause 21 provides for the giving of evidence by a live video link. However, I should make it clear that we should like to consult widely about important details. For example, should the judge and counsel be present in the same room as the child, or should they be in the courtroom? Who should be with the child if the judge and counsel are not? Should the child see what is happening in the courtroom?

Plainly, as the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme explained, the jury must see the child. However, does it help or hinder the child's feeling of relative ease to see the court? It is inevitable that any reconstruction of what has happened will be a disturbing experience, but would it make it more or less disturbing for the child to see what is happening in the courtroom, as well as to been by those in the courtroom?

We shall need to consult on all those points to ensure that the major advance that is secured by clause 21 works. It is not good enough to legislate on the overview. We must get the detail right. I know that several hon. Members will wish to assist in that process, as will several interest groups outside the House.

I now give way to the hon. Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), a fine upstanding representative of the legal profession, who will want to welcome this progressive move.

Mr. Lawrence: Flattery will get my hon. Friend almost anywhere.

I am not opposed to this sensible, interesting and exciting provision. However, the Minister has not yet told us — although he came close to doing so — how this provision will be implemented. It seems that, since it is a novel scheme, we should do what is normally done in such circumstances and run a pilot scheme, a controlled experiment, or series of such experiments, in some parts of the country to see how it works out and the problems that are thrown up. Is that what the Minister has in mind?

Mr. Mellor: Yes, that is certainly what we have in mind. That is partly what I was discussing in dealing with where we go from here. It is not good enough simply to say that we should have live video links: we must ensure that we get the technology and the atmosphere right. That will be advanced by conducting experiments, and we shall do so.

I hope that I have not taken an unduly long time to come to the central issue of this new clause, but it is important that we see the proposals in the proper context, which is whether it would be a further improvement if video recordings of interviews with child witnesses were more readily admitted as evidence.

I should like to make it clear, as I did in Committee, that it would be wrong to deprive the accused of his right to cross-examine the child in a trial in which a video recording had been admitted. I am sure that we all agree on that. Of course, that would be traumatic. I sympathise with parents who do not like the idea of the child being questioned critically about what happened. However, we would go from one extreme to the other — from an alleged insensitivity to the rights of the complainant, to a certain insensitivity to the rights of the defendant—if we did away with cross-examination.

Such cross-examination cannot be carried out other than by the counsel who has been appointed by the defendant to represent his interests. I say that quite firmly because, however much we envisage a well-meaning person interposing himself between the defendant and his lawyers on the one hand and the child on the other, that would dilute the interaction between counsel and child which is a key part of protecting the rights of the accused person — who we must remember is innocent until adjudged guilty. It would be inappropriate for us to fail to recognise that fact.

I have yet to be persuaded that such a person exists who could properly carry on the business of asking questions on both sides and do so in such a way as to satisfy us all that justice had properly been done. However, that is not

to say that anything goes and that the child should be subjected to brutal cross-examination. I do not believe that many counsel employ such techniques, because that would be wholly counter-productive. I am glad that those hon. Members who are lawyers and have some practical experience know that that is not the case. It is the judge's duty to prevent the bullying of a child. We hope that we would make the child's position easier by putting the child in a room away from the defendant and possibly—this remains to be decided—physically away from counsel also.

However, the question whether the video recording should be shown as part of the case remains to be considered. The child could be further examined in chief on that by the prosecution and cross-examined by the defence, all via the live video recording. I have considerable sympathy with that idea, because I can see advantages for the child and for the jury who have to decide the issue. The would have the opportunity to see the child's first full coherent attempt to explain exactly what he or she had been subjected to. A video showing the child's responses would be a telling document to put before those with the difficult task of unravelling the truth and deciding upon an issue of guilt or innocence which has severe consequences for both sides.

We must face up to the difficulty of whether we can be sufficiently sure of our ground in making such a change now. We already have to confront the difficulty, on which opinion is seriously divided, whether there is a role for an amicus figure who would interpose himself between counsel and child to ask questions.

There is also the question whether the use of a recording advances or derogates from the efficient transaction of court business, and whether it is an assistance or detriment to the child. Those are not issues on which we are entitled to plunge in on our own value judgements. Indeed, it has been suggested that the prospect of wider cross-examination because of the availability of the video could be detrimental to the child. It is possible that that could yield more fruits for cross-examination than if the child recounted the evidence live, via the video link, that very day. In that case, it might be a mixed blessing.

The dominant consideration in experiments such as the one at Bexley is to reduce the formality of interviews, to help the child come to terms with the situation and, sometimes, to provide a basis for intervention by social workers rather than criminal proceedings. If everyone knew that the recording was to be a key document at any future trial, it would be difficult to resist a tendency for the interview to become more rather than less formal. Those genuine issues need to be addressed.

I am extremely well disposed to this proposal, but it would be wrong for us simply to change the law now without consulting all the interest groups. The Law Society and the Criminal Bar Association, whose assistance has been properly prayed in aid by Labour Members on other parts of the Bill, have expressed the gravest reservations about the impact of such proposals on the right to cross-examine and on the retention of the oral tradition. Indeed, Labour Members often prayed in aid the retention of the oral tradition in relation to other parts of the Bill, and I make no criticism of that.

There should be an examination, the details of which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will want to give a little later because they are bound up with some other matters that I shall turn to. Having secured the live video link—we must not overlook that major step—there should be proper consideration coupled with proper consultation, with some research evidence base, to see whether what seems to be a good idea can be shown to be such. I hope we can see how it would work in practice and, perhaps, has worked in other jurisdictions.

That should be done, not to kick the ball into the river from which it will take years to fish out, but as a tightly disciplined exercise which will enable the results to be available within a sensible time span—it is significant that during the dinner hour we have such a well-attended House to discuss these issues—and will enable the House to return to the issue. We will then have a proper factual base on which to make a properly considered decision, having, rightly, consulted those who have a right to make their views known to us before we legislate. That would be a proper way of recognising the strength of the case and is in no sense an escape from the responsibility of making a decision.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: As I did not serve on this Committee but have been worried about the matter and been unable to reach an easy conclusion, I welcome what my hon. Friend said. It is common knowledge that many tape recordings are made of initial interviews of children who have been sexually abused. For the experiment and reference work to be done properly, those consulted will need to be able to look at some of those recordings before they form a judgment. Will they be eligible to do that, or will the police recordings be excluded from examination?

Mr. Mellor: That is a good point and further illustrates the details that cannot be avoided in providing us with a basis on which to make sensible progress. I hope that those recordings can be made available because, plainly, they are at the heart of the matter. I cannot answer conclusively, but I hope that they will be available on the basis that they will not be published but will be used to inform consideration by people of experience.

Several elements of child abuse need further consideration within a properly disciplined time span to enable early decisions to be taken. There is the question of the manner in which complaints are dealt with. I welcome and do not resent this debate, because I appeared on "Childwatch" to challenge one of the more stuffy old cobwebs of the law's approach to children. One of the most depressing aspects of the programme was the evidence of several doctors about the way in which medical examinations are carried out on children—the very point raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). The ordeal of giving an account of events and of being physically examined must not be worse or more humiliating for the child than the ordeal of having been sexually assaulted and brutalised in the first place.

To pick up the point of the hon. Member for Birmingham Ladywood (Ms. Short), there is a case for sending messages by circular to the police about how these things should be dealt with. There is a case for considering how the various agencies involved in the investigations of these matters conduct themselves. That would involve not only the police but doctors and social workers. Many complaints lead not to court but to social work action. We want to explore more technically precisely what can be done to improve the present position and to discover how inadequate it is. At present, most evidence and information is anecdotal.

7.45 pm

Dr. Godman: I am pleased to hear what the Minister is saying about the examination of children in such cases. Does he agree that the medical examination of a child who has been abused could form part of the healing process, if the medical examination is conducted properly by those who are appropriately trained? Does he further agree that, as part of the healing process, a genital examination should always form part of a wider medical examination?

Mr. Meller: I certainly agree with that, but as I found during my work on drugs, what I think about clinical matters does not matter much; what matters is the duty under which doctors regard themselves. They tend to respond to the views of their colleagues and to certain appropriate medical directions. At the heart of the exercise would be an exploration of whether the medical profession would want to consider in more detail the way in which these examinations are carried out.

There is room for further exploration of the video link and the appropriateness of using video recordings; there is room for exploration of the way in which a complaint is handled by the authorities, whether by the police, doctors or social workers; and there is room for a close examination of the way in which the rules of evidence bear on child witnesses, particularly whether the present rules of corroboration are appropriate and whether it is appropriate for a child to give sworn evidence.

It is particularly important that we take up the compelling strand of medical evidence that a child is less likely than an adult to invent an account of a sexual experience which is otherwise beyond the child's knowledge. The question is whether that can be established sufficiently as part of a medical consensus to make the present basis on which the laws of evidence are founded factually inappropriate. There is room for further exploration.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary proposes to make an announcement soon setting out the precise details of the way these examinations should be conducted. I hope that the proposals can go forward in a non-partisan way. There is concern on both sides of the House and my views have been greatly assisted by the points made orally and in writing to me during the passage of the Bill. I hope that what I have said will satisfy the hon. Member for Ladywood and her colleagues that we are not fobbing them off or kicking the ball into the river.

A great deal has been done, but more remains to be done. We will be better able to do that which remains to be done when we have cleared the thicket of facts, circumstances and consultations, and carried out our legitimate legislative function, after proper consideration has been given to very weighty matters.

Dr. Godman: I support the new clause. Clauses 17 and 21 are welcome advances on current practice. I believe that no child should be medically examined in a police cell. The practice of children being examined in police stations must cease forthwith. A focused medical examination, where gentle treatment is required, should form part and parcel of a wider medical examination of a child. As I said earlier to the Minister, a medical examination of a child in those circumstances can form part of the healing process.

It is deeply regrettable, even disgraceful, as the Scots have sent me here, that the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill contains no similar provision. That Bill was debated in Edinburgh last Monday. I informed the Solicitor General that I would table two new clauses that would be similar to clauses 17 and 21 of this Bill. Remembering that we have children's hearings in Scotland, these new clauses may be more appropriate, with certain changes, for the courts in Scotland.

New clause 6 is, I believe, more radical than clause 17, even though that clause allows a judge to admit a video recorded interview as admissible evidence. New clause 6 will encourage such an interview to be conducted as soon as possible after the offence has taken place, although I acknowledge that many horrible incidents often do not come to light for weeks or months. The police officers and social workers are doing fine work in the experiment in Bexley. I have met the social workers and police officers involved in this most useful and human approach to the difficult task of interviewing a child in dreadful and deeply distressing circumstances.

New clause 8 is more radical in approach than clause 21. The present practice of submitting children to cross-examination in the sombre surroundings of a courtroom is disgraceful and, in today's climate, indefensible. The antique formality and arcane lawyer's language of those proceedings must prove to be for many children a harrowing experience. Child witnesses or victims should be cross-examined in informal surroundings — similar in some respects to the children's hearings in Scotland, although many of those cases proceed to the sheriff court or even to the High Court.

Every Crown court in England and every sheriff court in Scotland should have a children's room, where such a cross-examination could take place in much less foreboding and disturbing surroundings than in a courtroom. In a recent case in a sheriff court in the east of Scotland, an advocate, representing a teacher who, it was alleged, had sexually assaulted a eight-year-old boy, shouted at that boy in the witness box. The manner and behaviour of that advocate was so disgraceful that the sheriff was quite right to adjourn the proceedings for five minutes to allow the advocate to calm down. That disgraceful incident involved the bullying of a eight-year-old child by a lawyer.

Our aim must be to make the examination of a child as compassionate and sensitive as possible. Although I may be persuaded or dissuaded on this matter, I believe that the judge, prosecuting council and defence agent should be in the room with the child. They should be informally attired and should sit at the table with the child, rather like in our children's hearings, which have in attendance the reporter to the children's panel, three members of the panel, the child, his or her parents, and the social worker.

The child should be accompanied by an adult, perhaps by a social worker who is independent of the case. There should also be what we in Scotland call, in our children's hearings, a befriender, someone who can calm down the child. The accused, the jury, the press and the public can watch the proceedings on a large monitoring screen in the courtroom. The press and the public do not need to be present. In the High Court, at the trial of a serious charge of sexual abuse, 35 to 50 people can be present. In Scotland the judge has the right to clear the courtroom of certain people. Nevertheless, the jury of 15 is still present, as are officials and others. That is not the solution.

The answer is to cross-examine the child in informal surroundings. Every Crown court building should have a children's room for the examination of children in the

most informal circumstances. I believe that these new clauses push off—as do clauses 17 and 21—into an era of more compassionate and sympathetic examination of children caught up in these crimes. Compassion and sympathy must be shown from the first moment that a child reports such an offence to a teacher, school attendance officer or health visitor. That sympathetic approach to the child must not stop once the case goes to court. The video presentation or closed circuit television network mentioned in the new clause should be part of a more humane approach to the examination of children.

I next ask the Minister about women police surgeons. Most victims are young girls. Most perpetrators of these attacks are men. Most examinations should be conducted by women doctors who have had the appropriate training. These examinations should not take place in a police station. One case that was brought to my attention recently was of a child being examined in a police station in a room that had had a sticky label, with the title "Medical Room", attached to the door. That is a disgraceful state of affairs. Children should be examined by appropriately qualified doctors in hospitals. That is why I say that we need an increase in the number of women police surgeons.

Clauses 17 and 21, or more appropriately these new clauses, take us much further down the road to compassionate investigation of a child involved in a case of sexual abuse.

8 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I warmly support the proposals embodied in new clause 6. Had it not been for my absence from the House last week with a Select Committee, I would have been happy to add my name to it. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on the manner in which she has handled this issue both in Committee and outside. She has shown the vigour and enthusiasm for a cause which we learnt to expect from her predecessor, although she has not yet demonstrated his prolixity.

I have had experience as a magistrate in a juvenile court. I voice the support of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which is naturally anxious about this. I serve on its central executive committee, as does the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who wishes to be associated with my remarks.

It has long been possible to produce a record of events in writing, and, with the development of technology, it is now possible to have a record of events in sound. A further development now makes it possible to have a video recording. If a written and a sound recording are acceptable in a court, why not a video recording? After all, the principle has been started upon in this very building, by having a live television link. If a live television link is acceptable, it is not such a great step to have a recording of TV proceedings.

Mr. Lawrence: There is, of course, a substantial difference. One can cross-examine live the police officer who is putting before the court a tape-recorded interview, but what we are discussing here is not being able to cross-examine live.

Mr. Sims: I think that my hon. Friend the Minister made it clear that that is exactly what could happen in subsequent proceedings. A video recording would simply be another form of evidence. I thought that was clear from what my hon. Friend had said. One point that he did not clarify, and on which the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) touched, has been put to me —that under clauses 13, 14 and 15, video recordings would be admissible as a document. He used the expression "document" in referring to video recordings.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is right. Video recordings would be a document and would be admissible, but the way in which clause 16 is phrased is such that the judge would be likely to rule in favour of admissibility only in exceptional circumstances. It would be possible, if we were to make progress with this, in due course to change the presumption, which at the moment is against admissibility.

Mr. Sims: I am grateful for that intervention. It strengthens the desirability of a specific legislative proposal to cover the idea that we are discussing. Child abuse is a serious and growing problem, as is demonstrated by the number of children who have taken advantage of Childline, which was set up a few months ago. Therefore, it is important that we should not only obtain convictions of those guilty of child abuse but do all that we can to reduce its incidence, in particular by dealing with cases as promptly as possible.

If evidence comes to light suggesting that there has been a case of child abuse, many week may elapse between the defendant being arrested and charged and the matter being aired in court. It may be that by that stage the parents of the child who has been the victim may simply not be willing to allow that child to appear, for very understandable reasons. They do not want the child to have to go through the trauma of appearing in court, whether it be with a video link or in the court itself. In that case, a conviction would be most unlikely.

Even with the live television link, the problem is that, because of the long time that has elapsed between the events that are the subject of the hearing and the hearing itself, the child's memory is bound to be dim. At that age, children have short memories. They are also more impressionable, and it may be that the child has been schooled to tell a particular story. Inevitably, whatever it says, it will carry that much less weight and make it less likely that a conviction may be secured.

If, as soon as possible after the discovery of a possible abuse, the child victim can be interviewed face to face, not with a television link, by an experienced person, in neutral surroundings and with the aid perhaps of models or pictures, surely that video can be extremely useful in court proceedings. Indeed, if all that interview has been videoed, it may make court proceedings unnecessary. As the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme said, experience elsewhere suggests that whatever the initial protests of the defendant, faced with a video along the lines that I have described, he will confess. The great advantage then is that he can be dealt with forthwith, whatever may be the appropriate form for dealing with him, which may be a question of punishment or treatment. The important thing is that that can be undertaken straight away without a lengthy wait and court proceedings.

If we have to wait for the court proceedings to take place, the video of such an interview can surely offer to the court important and valuable evidence to which it can give appropriate weight. I appreciate that the whole question whether there should be subsequent cross-examination

[Mr. Sims]

comes into the matter. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware of the considerable work done by Professor Glanville Williams, to whom my hon. Friend referred, and to Mr. J. R. Spencer, in his sector. I do not wish to protract the proceedings on the new clause by going into their arguments in detail, but they seem to me to be formidable. I am glad to know that my hon. Friend is sympathetic to the case.

I understand that there may be shortcomings in this clause as drafted. However, I am a little concerned that nothing may be done at all. I take the liberty of reminding my hon. Friend the Minister that in Committee he said:

"Legislative opportunities do not arise every year." [*Official Report*, Standing Committee F; 12 March 1987, c. 1066.]

This is an opportunity.

I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said about taking a careful look at this, and his promise that we shall shortly have a more detailed statement on what form that will take. He suggested that the House could return to the issue. I was not clear what sort of time span there would be. Before long, presumably, this Bill will become law, and other events may intervene. One would like to think that something could be done on this front. Therefore, before the Bill completes its passage, I wonder whether my hon. Friend might consider including in it some general provisions which would allow my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to make suitable regulations and take appropriate steps to implement the general principle of what we are trying to support without necessarily going into details at this stage.

Having said that, I thank my hon. Friend for the sympathetic reception that he has given to the new clause and hope that he will take on board the suggestion that I have made.

Ms. Clare Short: I agree with the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). Obviously, the Minister's remarks about promising to review all of this and to move forward urgently are welcome, but we are left with a worry about the time scale and the exact nature and terms of reference of the review. He referred to a statement that is to be made by the Home Secretary. That means that we are responding to his arguments without all the information that we ought to have in front of us. Like the hon. Member for Chislehurst, I wonder whether it is possible to put some amendment into the Bill that could be used after the review has taken place rather than wait for the next appropriate Bill to amend the law. In that way we could make progress in this area.

The evidence of the scale of the problem in this country is quite horrifying and terrifying. The research evidence is that at least 10 per cent. of all children are sexually abused, half of them when under the age of 10 years. There have been studies in various countries, including the United States, but this evidence has been accumulated in Britain by asking adults about what happened to them in the past. So if the problem is getting worse, as suggested by the NSPCC and so on, it might be even worse than that.

The perpetrators are almost without exception males, although occasionally there are colluding wives or cohabitees. But it is a male problem; it is men that do it to children. This part of our sexual culture—the way that men behave sexually—is shocking and horrifying.

Two thirds of the victims are girls and one third are boys; and 80 per cent. of the abuse takes place in the family or in the neighbourhood where the child lives. This is the most shocking thing of all. Virtually every woman with whom I have ever discussed this issue has had some experience in her childhood, be it a flasher or some bloke at a cinema trying to put his hand on her knee. But that is something quite different from living in a family where it is going on all the time and the child cannot turn to the people who are supposed to look after it to get protection. That is a much more serious problem. When we discuss these matters we talk as though it is the odd man, a stranger; we talk as though that is the nature of the problem and that is how it has to be dealt with. Unfortunately, it is not. There are horrific cases of abuse that hit the headlines, but 80 per cent. of it is repeated abuse within the family or in the neighbourhood in which the child lives.

It is also clear that such abuse in childhood is enormously damaging throughout life. I have been approached recently by some very impressive women who are working in therapy in this area in Birmingham. They talk about groups for adult women who were abused as children and are still bruised and emotionally upset; it is still affecting their whole attitude to life, their emotions and their relationships with their husbands and children. They have never had any help or assistance over a period of 20 years or more, and they are still in a damaged state because of that. The reason is that there are not enough facilities for that kind of help.

We know that much abuse goes undetected and unprosecuted. In this review—I do not know how wide it will be—the question of the education of those who deal with children in detecting the signs of abuse is very important. In the past—and Freud was partly to blame for this—it was often put down to child fantasy. Freud suggested that children fantasised about these matters, and much of the education of nursery nurses, teachers and so on indicated that that was so. But all the current evidence is that it is not so. As the Minister said, when children talk about these matters, they are more likely to be telling the truth than are adults even, because they can only get experience of these matters through being abused in the ways they allege. We really must look at the training of all individuals who deal with young children so that when children complain they are believed. Part of the problem is that children complain and are not believed.

8.15 pm

The Minister referred to the Bexley experiment. Like everyone else, I am extremely impressed by that but I am impatient to see it extended throughout the country.

Just a week ago, when I was in the bar one evening, a stranger who was visiting the House approached me and told me what happened to his daughter, a four-year-old girl, who had been abused by a neighbour. The first time she told her father he did not believe her; the second time he did. He rang the NSPCC, not knowing what to do, and was told that he should report the matter to the police. He went along to the police station with his daughter. A policeman in uniform interviewed her and she started to cry and said, "Daddy, what have I done wrong?", and she would not speak. It went on, and she had to have a medical examination.

The father asked if her own doctor could conduct the examination, but was told that that was impossible. So the

medical examination took place. The child cried, she was hurt, and she said that was what was done to her by the neighbour. It was obviously a continuation of the distress: what the doctor did that hurt was what the man next door had done. A few weeks later the child had to go to her doctor with an ordinary chest infection. She would not go in, and became hysterical. That is evidence of how much it distressed her to be medically examined in that way.

The outcome of the case was that the police said that there was insufficient evidence. No prosecution has been brought, the father feels deeply aggrieved and the neighbour is still living next door. The father is unemployed and cannot afford to move house. When he said to the police that if that was it he might deal with the matter himself by some kind of violent attack on the neighbour, he was told that if he did that he would be prosecuted.

I tell that story because I feel that it is typical of what is taking place throughout this land. Children are being hurt by the investigation that is supposed to assist in bringing about a prosecution—and that is not as crude a form of abuse as sometimes takes place.

When one considers the damage that the experience of the police station and the medical examination does to children, one is tempted to conclude that in some cases it is better not to prosecute. I am told by those advising me that that is absolutely wrong. One of the problems for children who have been subjected to continuing abuse is that they blame themselves and think there is something wrong with them, something impure. The experts say that prosecution is very important to the child, so that it may have a sense that society is on its side, and very important to the perpetrator so that he may have a sense that this sort of thing is going to be stopped.

There are families, my experts in Birmingham tell me, in which abuse has gone through generations—men who have abused their children have gone on to abuse their grandchildren. It is unbelievable, but they are aware of those patterns, and they are serious workers in this area; they are not just making wild allegations. So prosecution is extremely important, as is the promise of the review, but it is not the whole of it. Detection is part of it and so is therapy.

Some of the children who have been abused do not even know that they are entitled to control their own body and tell people that they are not allowed to touch them and use them in this way. Small children who have been abused do not have our conventional understanding of what they are entitled to do sexually, because they grow up in households in which they learn from adults that this kind of treatment of children is normal.

Part of the therapy when such practices are discovered is to re-educate the child about its own emotional behaviour. For example, where abuse is detected, one finds children being taken into care and blaming themselves because they are the ones who are taken out of the family as though they have done something wrong. Then they are put with foster parents, where there is sometimes evidence of their being abused. That is partly because of the way in which children who have been constantly abused behave. When they are being friendly they often behave in a sexually active way, and this seems to trigger continuing abuse.

All these questions must be looked at. We need more prosecutions, we need to look at the nature of the evidence, video links, and so on, but we must also look at training —so that abuse is detected and children are protected—and at the facilities for therapy throughout the country, so that children who have been damaged can be helped to overcome the effects of the abuse that they have suffered.

I agree with the Minister that these matters are so important that we should not deal with them in a party political way. However, we are entitled to be impatient. I hope that before the end of today the Minister will give us some indication of the time scale of the review and what views he has on the sort of legislative vehicle he envisages for any changes he wishes to make. Perhaps he should go back to the suggestion made by his hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst—that some amendments should be put into the Bill, perhaps in another place, in broad enough terms to be triggered later so that, once the review has taken place, there will not be another long delay before an appropriate Bill comes along.

Mr. Dickens: I was delighted to hear the Minister refer to the Bexley experiment, because there is no doubt that when children have been sexually abused, their first recollections are very important. By the time the child comes to the remand hearing, the committal proceedings and then the Crown court, that child has filled its head with so many things in between and its memory can be hazy and so cause problems in cross-examination. Therefore, it will be valuable if a child makes a statement and it is recorded at the first opportunity. I hope also that that recording could be shown to the child again so that he or she can recall what was said before going into each of the court hearings. That would be important.

Such a system works very well in Texas. Indeed, the sheriff of Dallas who visited the House of Commons had words with me. He gave me lots of useful information. For instance, in America, certainly in Texas, when children are nine years old they can give evidence and be sworn and believed just as an adult but if a child is under nine he has to go in front of a competency panel. That is a group of eminent people who ask the child questions such as, "Do you get smacked when you are naughty? Do you tell the truth? Are you good?" In the end, they give the child a certificate of competency. Once a child has that certificate, even if it is under nine years old, it can go into court and be believed in the same way as an adult.

Parents in this country feel most strongly that the law and our court proceedings are loaded heavily in favour of the sex abuser and against the child. It is hard for the child to be believed. In fact, judges will place great stress on telling members of the jury that it is unsafe to convict on the uncorroborated evidence of a child. Of course that is right; we do not want innocent people to be prosecuted. However, we do not want a charter for the child abuser. On most occasions, the child abuser commits the offence not in public but in private. There is seldom an audience. Sometimes they let themselves down by involving more than one child, but often when the child complains or the offence is found out by the parents, or the child has to go to the doctor with some medical problem, it is too late even for forensic corroboration, and things are very difficult.

I have received on my desk many cases involving children's homes where the children are mentally disabled and people are certainly abusing them but the Director of Public Prosecutions is unable to act in spite of the fact that he, the police and the Attorney-General know very well that those things are happening.

[Mr. Dickens]

I am encouraged to hear the Minister speak about the Bexley experiment. However, I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) that we are impatient because children are being abused all the time. The quicker we get safety valves in place so that the system is not loaded against the child and the parents of a child have a chance to bring someone to court and obtain a conviction, the better.

There is no doubt that child abuse is growing in this country, but parents are much more willing now to allow their children to testify. They feel that if they do not allow the child to go through the terrible experience of testifying, the man or woman—the hon. Member for Ladywood is correct, it is mostly men — will strike again and the problem will be pushed on elsewhere.

In America, where the initial videos are shown to the defence, as they would have to be, the defendant sits there with his lawyer and watches the film. Sometimes it is remorse that makes him plead guilty and sometimes it is the fact that he does not want the video shown in open court. On other occasions he can see that the evidence is strong or it might be part of a plea bargain where he feels that if he spares the child any further embarrassment the judge will be more lenient with the sentence. That is sometimes the case. I am not a lawyer and I think that plea bargaining has its place to save the child that traumatic experience. I speak simply as a parent and trustee of Childwatch.

The Government have been making rapid strides. They have reviewed the child care law, published inquiries into the sad deaths in cases of child abuse—we have learned from the lessons—and put the names of those who have been warned or convicted of child offences on a central computer so that there can be a blackball system when someone seeks employment to work with children. Those are all marvellous things that the Government have been doing, and I applaud them; I do not attack them. I should like to place on record my thanks to the Home Office and the departments within the Home Office for following up the many cases that I keep sending to it. I should also like to thank the Attorney-General. They have been very helpful and a strength to me in my campaigns.

I think that the Opposition's new clauses are right. I should like to see those things. However, it seems from what the Minister has said that it is a little premature, because we have the experiments and we want to get it right. It is a shame that we have to start our own pilot schemes when there is so much evidence in other countries on which we could draw. However, that is probably due to the volume of work within the Department, the problem of getting it right and the pressure from our legal friends who are obviously guarding their preserves. The Home Secretary has to deal with all those things.

I want to be fair, and I say to the Opposition that I agree with what they have said. I am sure that the Lords will have something to say on the new clauses. I have great sympathy with them, but I am satisfied with the answers that the Minister has given. However, I urge him and his Department to deliver the goods quickly. A general election will not make any difference, because this is an all-party issue. We are not fighting each other on protecting children in this honourable House; we are united. I am sure that the Home Office will continue to deliver the goods so that we can protect children, so that the child is heard more readily, so that the scales are not loaded in favour of the abuser but a balance is restored on behalf of the victim. There should be justice, so that people are not acquitted simply because of the way in which our legal system operates. Therefore, I support the Bill as it stands but the new clauses are marvellous and I am sure that in a short time they will be part of our legislation.

Mr. Lawrence: I rise, not to guard my preserve, but to guard the preserve of everybody in this country who wants to see that justice is done. I congratulate the Government on bringing forward clause 21 as an attempt to deal with a substantial modern evil.

The video link is such a significant and revolutionary proposal that everybody will think it is a good idea in principle. However, we must take great care before its details are put in train because of the very real possibility, if we are not careful, not only that innocent people might be convicted — it sometimes happens that innocent people are accused in our courts, even of sexual offences against children—but that the guilty will more easily go free. That is why I do not see much merit in new clause 8, because the

"fit person other than the prosecution and defence counsel"

may not be fit enough in experience and practice to ask the child the right questions, either for the prosecution or for the defence.

8.30 pm

New clause 6 seems to offer an alternative to the live television link. It is difficult to conceive that the interview would be videoed or the child would give its evidence live via a television link. Of the two possibilities, it is obviously better for the child to give evidence live by the television link. The other should be relegated to an alternative, to be used if there is no live television link in certain circumstances upon which the court may subsequently decide.

Mrs. Golding: I want to put the hon. and learned Gentleman right, as I am afraid that he is confused about the use of video recording and the live video link. The video recording is a presentation of a piece of evidence that is recorded before—often well before—the case comes to court. The video link provides the facility within the court to cross-examine a child, if need be.

Mr. Lawrence: There is a possibility that the child could be interviewed in chief on a television link. That would make the video recording of what had been said earlier redundant. That possibility should be considered. If the video interview is to be used only as evidence in chief and the child is then wheeled in for cross-examination, I doubt whether the marrying-up would be a successful procedure.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. and learned Friend, who is one of my most clear-headed colleagues from the legal profession, has shown how necessary it is to explore the ground further to see how we stand. As I understand it, the video link provision would permit examination in chief and cross-examination via the video link in circumstances to be determined. The case for video recording in no way depends on whether the live video link is available. Rather, it depends on whether there is some advantage in a system that allows the child's first account of what happened to be given to the authorities in the form of a video recording, and whether that would be a valuable document that could be shown to a jury and would assist it to determine the

truth or otherwise of that account. The child would then be available, via the live video link, for further examination in chief and cross-examination, should that be necessary. The matter that we must consider further is the balance of advantage of allowing a video that is taken in such circumstances to be admitted.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the position clear. It shows that there are many variants of the use of video links that have to be considered with great care.

I agree with what has been said about children being good witnesses in court—my experience confirms that. They do not seem to be over-intimidated by circumstances in court into forgetting their complaints. The courts have been most considerate to children: judges usually take off their wigs, and sometimes their gowns, and ask council to do likewise. The usual forbidding formality of the court is reduced so that children can give evidence in more informal and friendly surroundings, and my experience is that they give it well.

The greatest problem in many cases might be the child's identification of the offender. That is unlikely to be admissible, as part of the evidence in a case, on a video link. It is inconceivable that children would produce evidence of identification at an identification parade. That may be another complication. That apart, the problem does not seem to be quite as severe, because it is not as traumatic for the child to recount afterwards what happened as to identify the offender, if he is a stranger.

If it is possible for the defence counsel to say to the jury, "Of course, if you had seen this child and been able to judge its demeanour in court as it was asked questions by both sides, that would have been better than seeing it on television"——

Ms. Clare Short: Why?

Mr. Lawrence: The impression that the hon. Lady might give when seen on television being questioned by an interviewer or an audience might sometimes be misleading. The only way to remove all the misleading factors that sometimes obtain on television is to have the viewer present. That is why it would be desirable, if it were not otherwise undesirable, to have the child in court. If the child's absence makes it more likely that an accused person will get the benefit of the doubt and be acquitted, even though he is guilty, that would be counter-productive. Therefore, the quality of the television must be excellent.

At present, defence solicitors and counsel say to an accused person in these circumstances, "You must realise that if you are guilty and are found guilty, and have caused a little child to go into court to give this kind of evidence, you will receive no mercy whatever from the judge." That constitutes a great deal of proper pressure on an accused person who is guilty to plead guilty and avoid what might be the worst consequences of trying to brazen it out and force a child into the witness box to give evidence.

If it becomes easier for an accused person to plead not guilty and see how matters develop on television, the measure may be counter-productive. I do not want that to happen. That is another reason for considering the matter with care, lest someone who is guilty finds it easier to be acquitted under the television system than under the present one.

According to clause 21 and new clause 6, the television link cannot be used without the leave of the court. Defence counsel might say that he did not want the television link, and the judge might say that he overruled him, and wished to keep it.

If there is a television link and the man is convicted, there could be an appeal. If someone who was otherwise guilty and would have been convicted was acquitted on appeal because he had not had a fair trial, as the wishes of his counsel had not been observed by the judge, who gave his leave for a television link instead of refusing it, that, too, would be counter-productive. The Lord Chief Justice will have to lay down careful guidelines on the way in which a judge at a Crown court deals with these video links——

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Lawrence: —and circulate them to Crown court judges, so that they can follow and abide by carefully worked-out procedures.

There are dangers in this procedure, but I do not think that they outweigh the very real advantages. If they do not, we will strike a significant blow against the child abuser. Because there are dangers, there must be care. Every detail must be properly worked out so that nothing goes wrong. Although I should like to see this matter concluded as quickly as possible, I do not think that it would be right for my right hon. Friend to skip over any of these problems in order to put the matter immediately or very speedily into action.

I hope that my remarks have not been too lengthy.

Mrs. Golding: May I say how much I welcome the Minister's remarks on new clause 7? We welcome the comment that perhaps one day its provisions will come to fruition. I welcome also what the Minister said on new clause 8 about the live video link. Perhaps when he looks at the proposal in new clause 8, when he considers additions to clause 21, he will see how excellent new clause 8 is.

On new clause 6, while I welcome some of the things that the Minister said, I cannot see that there are any real difficulties with the new clause. It has been gone through most carefully to get rid of many of the objections raised in the House, and although I understand that the Minister needs to consult the legal profession—perhaps it is the main stumbling block in his mind—other professions have put their weight behind the new clause. The nursing profession, the National Children's Bureau, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Police Federation — many people — have already considered these things and said that this provision needs to be made now. I hope that when the Home Secretary makes his statement to the House he will ensure that it is something that can happen in this Bill and not have to be carried over for yet another Bill.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 9

PEREMPTORY CHALLENGE

'The following shall be substituted for section 12(1)*(a)* of the Juries Act 1974 (as amended by the Criminal Law Act 1977)—

(a) That person shall have the right to challenge not more than three jurors without cause and all or any of the jurors for cause.'.—*[Mr. Chris Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause seeks to maintain the right of peremptory challenge of up to three jurors for each defendant in a criminal trial. In the Bill the Government are seeking to remove that existing right of peremptory challenge. This is one of the most important changes in the Bill. In Committee, we made it clear that Opposition Members regard it as an unacceptable change. We wish to retain the right of peremptory challenge, so we have tabled this new clause.

It is very important to maintain peremptory challenge to ensure not only the fairness of jury trial but also the perception of that fairness by those who stand trial in front of a jury. In Committee, the Home Secretary set out in some detail his arguments for seeking to remove all right of peremptory challenge. I went back to those proceedings today in preparing these remarks and found that his arguments seemed to centre round two specific points.

8.45 pm

The first was that the right hon. Gentleman saw the right of peremptory challenge as giving what he called "a substantial tilt" in favour of the defendant in court proceedings. His second argument was that peremptory challenge was a derogation from the random principle which ought to exist in the selection of juries. Both arguments are faulty.

The evidence does not substantiate the case that peremptory challenge gives a substantial tilt in favour of the defendant. The Government themselves set up the Crown prosecution service survey of peremptory challenge and the published results of that survey are now available. That survey, set up and published by the Government, says:

> "In both single-defendant and multi-defendant trials, the use of challenges does not appear associated with a lower likelihood of conviction. Over half (60 per cent.) of all trials in which one or more peremptory challenges were used ended with convictions on one or more counts. This is slightly higher than the conviction rate of 53 per cent. in trials in which no challenges were used."

The evidence of the survey is absolutely crystal clear. There is no tilt in favour of the defendant where peremptory challenge is exercised.

The Home Secretary himself admitted later in Committee that, as he said,

> "Not much can be built on the statistics in the only form in which we could provide them".

He also said:

> "they do not show anything the other way". — [*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 3 March 1987; c. *840*.]

He is saying, in effect, that the statistical evidence shows the impact of peremptory challenge to be relatively neutral when it comes to securing a conviction. The conclusion must therefore be that there is no substantial tilt in favour of the defendant, the evidence for this coming from the Government's own figures and survey.

Let us just look at the other argument of the Home Secretary—the importance of the random principle. To say that the random principle must be maintained and can only be distorted by the use of peremptory challenge assumes that the system of jury selection is perfectly random at present. It is not. First, there is the use of limited areas for drawing jurors from the electoral lists; then there are further restrictions in drawing names from simply some particular pages of the electoral lists. The composition of jurors ends up far from a random reflection of society at large.

Substantial evidence was also revealed by the research of Baldwin and McConville. The evidence was adduced at considerable length by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in Committee, but it bears reiteration because it is very important. They discovered that only 28 of 3,912—that is, 0·7 per cent.—of jurors in Birmingham were of West Indian or Asian origin. That is not a random reflection of the population of Birmingham. One would almost certainly have expected the figure to be 15 or 20 times as great if it were to be a random reflection. They noted a similar, although slightly less marked, disparity in the use of jurors of Irish origin. They also found that 72·5 per cent. of jurors were male, whereas the percentage of males in the 1976 household survey was 49·7.

As if to reinforce that point in the Baldwin and McConville survey, there is the example of the Bristol riot trial, in which all the defendants were black and the judge advised the defence during the initial court proceedings to use the right of peremptory challenge to obtain a more racially balanced jury. When that advice comes from a judge, it must surely lead us to question whether the system is perfectly random.

To remove the possibility of a safety valve that can correct some of the imbalances which may on occasions occur in the production of juries is, we believe, to go in the wrong direction. The use of peremptory challenge helps to adjust in favour of balance where an ultimately non-random and imperfect system has not operated to produce balance.

Those seem to be the two principal reasons that the Home Secretary was advocating for the Government's decision to move for the abolition of the right of peremptory challenge. However, there are several reasons, in addition to the arguments against the Home Secretary's points, which can and must be made to reject the Government's case. There are two particularly overwhelming reasons which were made by the Government themselves in the White Paper "Criminal Justice", published in March of last year, which started the process which germinated into the Bill which we are discussing today.

In paragraph 35 of the White Paper, the Government said:

> "The problem is whether that result can be achieved without either leaving defendants with an understandable sense of grievance or opening up challenge for cause to an unseemly and disturbing degree."

There are two important points there. The first is the likelihood of an increased and perverse use of challenge for cause. If the right of peremptory challenge is removed, there is likely to be a much more frequent and much more obstructive use of challenge for cause. I do not think that that would necessarily be in the interests of the proceedings of the court or of the feelings and dignity of jurors.

One point which has been made is that a juror, if peremptorily challenged, may feel aggrieved. I believe a juror is far more likely to feel aggrieved if he has been challenged for cause than if he has been challenged peremptorily. The likelihood of an increase in challenge

for cause is one reason which must be borne in mind and which leads us to wish to retain some degree of peremptory challenge.

The other major reason — in some ways the most important reason of all—is the crucial importance of the need for the defendant to have confidence in the fairness of the system. One of the pillars of our system of justice is that the defendant must feel that he has been given the fullest possible chance to have a fair trial. If no peremptory challenge is open to him, we have removed what is in many ways a vital safety valve to enable him at least to feel that he has had the opportunity to secure a completely fair and balanced jury. It is a very important point about the perception of the system by those who are accused, be they innocent or guilty but particularly when they are innocent. That above all leads the Opposition to say that peremptory challenge must stay. Therefore, we hope that the House will vote for the new clause.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Speaking in the debate on another new clause, my hon. Friend the Minister said that it was the duty of the Government to legislate only after proper and due consideration of a matter. Indeed, in the context in which he was speaking, he was also talking about there being a preliminary trial of the evidence obtained by the use of a video. That is a sentiment which I wholeheartedly applaud.

The proposition put forward is that the jury system should be changed radically without any evidence to support it. It is said that the jury system is not random and is not representative. Of course, statistically that could never be so when a jury was selected. That has been well set out by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). He also stressed something with which I, as a lawyer of considerable experience in defence as well as in prosecution agree: the importance of a fair trial and the feeling of a defendant that he has had a fair trial. That is fundamental to our system of justice.

Why is that so important? If a defendant has a sense of injustice, he will never be satisfied with the result of his trial. If he is sent to prison—and we seem to be sending more people to prison than any other nation — it is important that when he is in prison he should feel that he had a fair trial with an opportunity to be fully represented and to express himself. One has only to think why that is so important. We have one prison officer to every 10 or 20 prisoners. If a prisoner is unhappy, he will not be very manageable in prison. He will have a sense of injustice and a tremendous chip on his shoulder. Undoubtedly, in terms of pure cost, it will mean a higher proportion of prison officers to prisoners. It is important that a prisoner should feel that he has had a fair crack of the whip.

9 pm

Not only is jury selection not random, but on the many juries that I have encountered, out of 15 jurors, 12, 13 or 14 are women. I have no objection to women serving on a jury. It is important that they should be on juries. One has only to walk around the streets to find that women comprise 50 per cent. of the population. One cannot say that random selection is necessarily representative. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury drew attention to the statistics in Birmingham, where only 0·7 per cent. of black people perform jury service, whereas the percentage should be higher.

A defendant from the middle of Brixton will not be happy if he sees 15 white people from Acacia avenue. He will not feel that e is getting a fair trial. He will think, "Those people do not understand my position, the sort of problems that I have, or the sort of pressures that I have been under." He will not feel that he will have a fair trial. Likewise, if a young male person stands trial by a jury with 12 or 15 middle-aged ladies on it, he will think that they will not understand young people, their problems and the things that they do and feel. He will not feel that such a jury is representative.

I do not believe that by having two black people, by challenge, on a jury, one is any more likely to be acquitted. I do not think for a moment that if one has a few more males, a few more females, or younger people on a jury, one will get an acquittal. Indeed, the statistics show that one will not. However, the defendant will feel that he will have a fairer trial and a more representative jury. It is far better to have a trial heard by what amounts to a representative jury.

The right to peremptory challenge is often used merely to keep a better balance on a jury. The statistics show that such challenges do not give defendants an unfair advantage. The whole argument started because the Home Secretary said they give defendants an unfair advantage. Of course, statistics now show that when there is a challenge, a defendant is slightly more likely to be convicted. It is said that it is to protect defendants that this measure is being put forward, and that it will be more helpful to defendants.

We have no statistics or evidence. The only argument that we have had has been based on a hunch. Hon. Members continue to hear phrases such as, "I feel," "I think," "people say," "some judges think," and we have even heard, "the Lord Chief Justice thinks." We are trying to change the evidential practice of centuries. In evidential terms, a thought or a hunch amounts to zero. Adding hunches to thoughts amounts to nothing. One has no evidence upon which to change the practice of centuries.

I am sure that, after proper consideration, most people would feel that the jury system should not be changed on the basis of a hunch, thought or feeling. A change should be based on evidence. The judicial system is good, and the jury system is delicate. It is not to be lightly overthrown or changed. It needs to be changed on the basis of hard facts and evidence. All the hard facts and evidence point to a need not to change the jury system.

The matter started when my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) rather sensationalised the Cyprus secrets trial. I am bound to say that he was not alone. Many people at that time were looking round for a scapegoat for what was a sensational acquittal. Many of us felt that that acquittal showed the maturity of the British system of justice. I cannot think of any other country in the world where allegedly confessed traitors would have been acquitted. That spoke of the maturity and independence of our judicial system.

However, the Bill speaks of immaturity, not maturity. It speaks of rushing into something without thinking; of acting on the spur of the moment on the basis of the sensationalisation of the secrets trial when one was really looking for a scapegoat. In that case, a solicitor tried to sell confidential material to the papers, in breach of all ethics. We have in that case an anecdote of a most dishonest and disreputable member of the legal profession.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): No one has ever denied it.

Mr. Ashby: Apparently, part of that anecdote is that one person said that he wanted one sort of jury, a second another sort of jury, and the third, a distinguished lawyer, said, "What the devil, we cannot choose our jury anyway."

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham says that no one has denied it——

Mr. Jessel: No one has.

Mr. Ashby: —but he will appreciate—if he does not, I am telling him now—that any decent member of the legal profession, any barrister, could not speak even now to deny, affirm or anything else what went on in that conversation. He could not do that.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is not the irony of this that all of us who have earned our crust at the criminal bar have challenged jurors in the hope that we may obtain a jury that is advantageous to our point of view, but usually it does not work out that way? The extraordinary mystery of the jury system is that juries act against what we, as defenders, believe to be our interests.

Mr. Ashby: Yes, I could not agree more. One cannot go into how a jury reaches a decision. That, as my hon. Friend rightly says, is the marvellous mystery of a jury, and long may it last.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I agree with everything that the hon. Gentleman has said so far, but is he mindful of the fact that, when talking about manipulation or alleged manipulation in the Cyprus spy trial, all the jurors who tried the case, whether there were challenges or not, had been vetted by the prosecution to ensure that they were suitable for such a case?

Mr. Ashby: I understand that to have been the case. Certainly that was reported in the press to be the case. However, I was not at the trial. I know no more than what I have read in the press and what has been said in the House.

Some people say that the secrets trial was a multiple trial and that in multiple trials the right to challenge should be limited. However, one should recognise that multiple trials are at the behest of the prosecution which puts together a number of people. In law, each individual is being tried individually. Technically, all the defendants are put together in one trial as a convenience. To impose such a limitation would be a complete breach of that principle.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that challenges for cause were acceptable and allowable. Such challenges for cause are limited. The question is asked of the judge and many, if not most, challenges are not allowed. Much has been made in respect of peremptory challenges and much has been said of the fact that we should have challenges for cause.

One point that arises for the practising advocate is that most barristers are aware that jurors attend trials willingly. We all know that they give up their homes and their jobs to perform a public duty. A random selection process can throw up jurors who are, to say the least, illiterate. As trials become more and more complex, many documents are involved. An experienced advocate is always quick to detect a juror who cannot read, or who appears to be illiterate, and challenges. I know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will say that that is simply a challenge for cause, but it is important that most advocates should feel that they are not putting a juror through the degrading experience of having his shortcomings exposed to the entire court.

Such a juror always starts by saying that he has left his glasses behind, or that he cannot read from that distance, and asks for the oath to be read to him. When there is a pile of documents, if a peremptory challenge is made, the juror will not feel that he has been picked on specifically or that his shortcomings have been exposed; yet he will be out of the trial, and it can quickly be established that the next juror can read.

Mr. Favell: I have listened to my hon. Friend and to other learned counsel who are present this evening. As they all appear to agree that the challenge is completely hit and miss, why on earth should we keep it?

Mr. Ashby: I hope that I have been saying that it is not.

Mr. Budgen: It is hit and miss; that is the advantage of it.

Mr. Ashby: First, I was talking about a way of obtaining what appears to be a fair and balanced jury. My second point is not hit and miss. Peremptory challenge is often used as a polite way of challenging for cause without offending someone who, for example, cannot read. I am sure that few advocates have not done that time and again.

It is as necessary for the prosecution to stand jurors by —in other words, to challenge them—as it is for the defence. That applies to what might appear to be peremptory challenges. Justice must be seen to be done, and be seen to be even-handed. Without that, we have no justice. If the prosecution can challenge without cause, the defence must have the balancing right. Not to give that right would violate the very principles raised by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State when he spoke in support of the European convention on human rights, which insists that the prosecution and the defence should have equal rights.

As I have said, my experience runs contrary to my right hon. Friend's hunches. However, it coincides entirely with his research. Challenges do not alter a jury to make it convict or acquit, but they can alter a jury to make it more representative. They make all parties in the court happy with the trial and more prepared to accept a conviction because it follows a fair trial. If a single piece of evidence can be adduced to rebut what I have said, I shall reconsider my decision to vote in favour of the new clause.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The Home Secretary has what appears to be a personal determination to get rid of the right of peremptory challenge. In my view, that determination is based on myth. The Home Secretary appears to regard the right of peremptory challenge as a Trojan horse invading the jury system and leading to an abuse of jury trials—through abuse of the peremptory challenge itself—and to an unfair advantage in favour of the defendant. However, as the debate on this issue has continued over the months, that Trojan horse has been shown to be no more than the Home Secretary's hobby horse. We considered this matter in detail in Committee, and I spoke at length on it. You will be comforted to know, Mr. Speaker, that I do not intend to speak tonight at great length on the matter. However, I wish to reiterate a few points which, I suggest, are important.

9.15 pm

It has been suggested in recent years, particularly in relation to the Cyprus spy trial, that there has been abuse of the right of peremptory challenge, but no evidence whatsoever has been produced to justify that allegation. At most, there has been a little bit of anecdote about what happened between counsel in the robing room during the Cyprus spy trial. But neither the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), nor anybody else, other than those members of the bar, knows what happened.

The most one can say is that it appears that at that trial there was some discussion between counsel as to how the right of peremptory challenge should be exercised. That discussion was completely proper. It happens in many cases, and it is right that it should happen. It is a proper, and sometimes an important, part of the duty of counsel.

The allegation that in some way the use of peremptory challenge gave an unfair advantage to a defendant has been thoroughly laid to rest by the Crown prosecution service survey, to which the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) adverted a little while ago. We know that the Government enthusiastically expected that the CPS survey would show that if jurors were peremptorily challenged at a trial, the defendant was more likely to be acquitted. In fact, the CPS survey showed the opposite. Putting it at its highest, there is no evidence whatsoever that peremptory challenge gives any advantage at all to the defence.

My next point is a very serious one. If we remove the right of peremptory challenge so that all jury challenges by the defence have to be challenges for cause, we shall open up a hornet's nest of practical problems that will beset the courts for years to come. I shall give a few general examples of situations in which peremptory challenges are sometimes used. The first is the kind of case to which the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) referred — the apparently illiterate juror. I agree with him that experienced counsel can tell very quickly whether a juror appears to be illiterate.

If the right to peremptory challenge is exercised, all that the defence counsel has to say is, "Challenge." The juror leaves the jury box; there is no embarrassment, and he does not know why he has been challenged. The judge usually refers very simply to the right to challenge and to the fact that it has been exercised and says that the next person should step forward. It is all over within a matter of seconds.

If, however, defence counsel had to challenge for cause on the ground that the juror was illiterate but the prosecution did not agree that the juror was illiterate, or the juror did not agree that he or she was illiterate, the juror would know what was being alleged on behalf of the defendant and might regard that as an insulting allegation.

A test may have to be applied as to whether a person is illiterate. In a fraud case, for example, it would be absurd to have an illiterate person on the jury, because there would be many documents to examine. What tests will be applied? Will there be reading or arithmetical tests? If at the end of the day the judge decides, having considered the matter, that the juror is literate and therefore should be on the jury, how can the defendant expect a fair trial from that juror? What will be the effect on the rest of the jury if that juror turns out to be the strongest character among the 12?

Mr. Favell: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman in favour of the American system, in which each juror is cross-examined independently before a decision is made by the defence counsel as to whether that juror should appear on the jury? That is what the hon. and learned Gentleman appears to be advocating.

Mr. Carlile: Not at all. The hon. Gentleman has not been listening. I am simply warning the House that if peremptory challenge is removed that very American system which he and I both dread so much will develop. He has hit the nail on the head. I do not know why the Home Secretary finds this such a funny subject. Right through the Committee stage he wore the same grin as he is wearing tonight. I doubt whether the Home Secretary has ever seen a jury trial through in his life. It would be interesting to hear if he had.

As those of us in practice know, it sometimes happens that among the waiting jury there is a person who appears to be asleep, labile, frivolous, apparently drunk or apparently drugged. In those circumstances, responsible defence counsel would again use that one word "challenge" and that would be the end of the matter. What happens if he has to challenge for cause? He will have to stand up and say to the judge, "Challenge for cause. That juror, in my opinion, is drunk or drugged." What will happen then? There will be a debate in front of the juror in question. The judge must decide the issue in the presence of the juror. If he finds that the defence counsel, albeit acting in good faith, was wrong and the juror was not drunk, drugged, labile, frivolous or sleeping, what effect will that challenge have on the defendant's prospects of a fair trial? In my submission, those prospects could be very severely damaged.

Another example, and one that was not raised in Committee, relates to trials in Wales, including those in my constituency. As the House will know, a substantial proportion of people in Wales speak Welsh as their first language. It is very easy to tell when a jury is being sworn in Wales whether a juror is more comfortable in Welsh or English. That is a very small practical problem that is solved by experienced counsel, because there is an alternative oath. The Welsh version is printed on the back of the English version. Therefore, as soon as the juror stands up to take the oath, as long as the counsel can see the language on the back of the jury card, he knows in which language the juror will take the oath, and so can challenge before the oath is taken.

Quite understandably, many defendants in Wales, people who are not standing trial for offences with any kind of political overtones, simply feel more comfortable in their native Welsh language and wish to be tried by people who understand that language. Although in some courts in Wales there are simultaneous translations—a system which works well—that practice is not followed in all courts. Defendants are often interviewed by the police in the Welsh language because, fortunately, many officers speak Welsh. The nuance, inflexion and emphasis of the Welsh word may be very difficult to identify for an English-speaking jury. All those of us who have practised in Wales have experienced that from time to time.

What will happen? Will counsel have to stand up and say to the judge, "Challenge, your Honour, because that juror does not speak Welsh."? Will we then have a Welsh language test to distinguish between learners like myself, who in those circumstances might or might not be allowed

[Mr. Carlile]

on the jury, and fluent Welsh speakers, who would be allowed on the jury? What standards will be applied by the courts? If the judge decides that the juror should remain on the jury, that decision could have a devastating affect on the defendant on whose behalf the challenge had been mounted.

If the House goes down the road proposed by the Government—I notice with some pleasure that this is opposed by a substantial number of Conservative Members—we will introduce into our law a dangerous area of dispute, debate and complexity. I believe that about 600 Crown courts sit on any given day. Will there be 300 or 600 different practices? Even 15 different practices in this important matter of challenge for cause would do a grave disservice to the reputation of our criminal justice system.

Our present system may not be very logical, but sometimes the best things are not very logical. This system has stood the test of time. It makes defendants feel that they have had a fair trial, although, as we know from the evidence, the use of the peremptory challenge does not really affect the outcome of the trial. There is something about our system of jury challenge, which I know from talking to people from abroad who have watched our courts, that people at first find surprising, but when they have seen it operate find very acceptable and praiseworthy.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): I think that we all admire the ingenuity of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) in securing this debate. I understood that, if one tabled an amendment on Report which just said,"Leave out clause 86", it would not be called. What one now does is table a new clause repeating what would have been in clause 86 and, happily, it is called. I am delighted that it has been. I say to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, in case he gets the wrong impression, that not all the lawyers in this House disagree with what he is doing. I support his intention to accept the Roskill committee's recommendation to get rid of the right of peremptory challenge.

I disagree totally with one point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), which was expressed differently by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). The hon. and learned Gentleman described the spy trial as an abuse of the system of peremptory challenge. So long as the right of peremptory challenge exists, it is the responsibility and duty of defence counsel, if they consider that it is in their client's interest, to use it. I do not believe that there was any abuse in that case.

Mr. Budgen: One of the mysteries of this system is that all of us have used the right of peremptory challenge to try to rig juries in our favour but, more often than not, it does not work that way. Although we believe that we have done a great service for our client, more often than not we have not.

Mr. Carlisle: The delight of my hon. Friend is the honesty of the language that he uses. As he said, he has attempted to use the peremptory challenge to rig juries in favour of those whom he has represented.

Mr. Lawrence: It would not be an abuse.

Mr. Carlisle: It would not be an abuse. It is the duty of defence counsel, so long as that power exists, to use it in what he believes are in the interests of his client. The question is: should it exist?

Mr. Budgen: It does not work.

Mr. Carlisle: I shall come to that point.

Frankly, I do not believe that it should exist. I am a strong believer in the jury system. I believe that it means trial by 12 of one's fellow citizens, chosen at random, and that it should not be the right of the defence to "rig"—to use the word of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—a jury to assist his case.

The fact is that, totally properly and rightly, especially in multi-handed cases, clear efforts are made by the use of peremptory challenge to achieve a jury that the defence rightly or wrongly believes—I concede to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West that the defence may do so wrongly—to be more likely to give a verdict in its favour. That is not what the jury system is about. If one is to defend that system and the vital importance of the right for trail by a jury of 12 of one's fellow citizens, one must accept that they should be 12 of one's fellow citizens who are chosen at random, and that there should be no power to attempt to manipulate the jury in favour of the defence.

9.30 pm

Mr. Ashby: Would my right hon. and learned Friend accept a jury of 12 men, or an all-female jury? Does he think that that would be a reasonable random selection?

Mr. Carlisle: One must accept that the right to challenge for cause can be removed. I see no reason why one should not argue that it is wrong to have a jury of one sex trying a particular case and put to the judge the argument that there should be someone of the other sex on that case.

I have never claimed to be an amateur psychiatrist, nor do I believe that one is employed as a barrister to act as a psychiatrist. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West has said, one is often wrong when one challenges. The existence of that right is largely archaic. Therefore, I support what the Government are trying to do. As we want to get on with all the other matters in this debate, I have made the point that I wanted to make and have tried to do so succinctly. I hope that the House will support my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the view that he has taken.

Mr. Budgen: Most of the important things in life are not capable of scientific proof. It is not possible to prove the advantages of parliamentary democracy or the advantages of the jury system. If I may embarrass my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, I should like to say that one reason that I admire him is his diffident and kindly attitude to the most important traditions in our society. He understands the importance of slow, inconsistent, organic change and the importance of the Tory tradition, as opposed to the radical tradition, in the Conservative party.

As a Tory, but one who, on occasions, is also a radical, I am none the less a supporter of the jury system. I am a practitioner before juries. I have been an undistinguished provincial barrister since 1962. As I have muddled my way through my professional life, I have come to the conclusion that the jury system is one of the most

important bastions of freedom in our society. Of course, it is incapable of any logical analysis or of any understanding, by clever analysis, of one decision or another.

As one listens to the debate, one realises that most of all it is about a sense of justice, a concept which is as vague and insubstantial as it is possible to put forward. However, when my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) put it forward, I felt that it was important.

If, for a moment, I could try to engage my right hon. Friend's interest, I might say to him that in Wolverhampton we recently had a series of severe civil disturbances. They occurred mainly because the West Indian population did not have my instinctive Tory sense of the rightness of the jury system. They said — quite wrongly, in my opinion — that they did not agree with the police complaints procedure. They do not understand the impartiality of a coroner's inquest. They do not believe that the Director of Public Prosecutions would act fairly and impartially in respect of the police. They do not understand that an English jury would act fairly in dealing with a policeman whose action had led to the death of a black man. In short, they were uncertain about English institutions.

I do not understand English institutions, just as I do not understand my diffident faith in the Church of England, but I support institutions that I do not understand. *[Laughter.]* One of the great dangers of the arrogant and logical person is that he believes that that which he cannot understand should be dismissed. One of the most important aspects of the jury system is its mystery, which depends most of all upon its random quality. Its random quality is to some extent achieved by the right of peremptory challenge.

I remember standing in robing rooms at a quarter to 10 and saying to my fellow barristers, "Right-ho chaps, let's get on with rigging the jury. We shall object to anybody who gets into the jury box wearing a suit or who is seen near the *Financial Times* or *The Daily Telegraph*." But it does not work. While at the age of 28 I used to think it was all a tremendously clever and logical wheeze, now as an unsuccessful middle-aged man I bow before the mystery of the jury system.

I remind my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who is a distinguished student of English history, that sometimes mystery is more important than logic. He should interfere with the system of peremptory challenge only with the greatest diffidence. Most of all, the system of peremptory challenge leaves the defendant and his supporters with a sense of justice and a sense of justice prevents mob rule in our society. That sense of justice is lacking most of all in the West Indian community in Wolverhampton, because they do not trust our institutions. I advise my right hon. Friend not to interfere with our institutions, because 98 per cent. of our population trust in them. The public do not understand them, just as they do not understand this institution, but the jury system, for all its inconsistencies and illogicalities, is a mystery with which we tamper at our peril.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Budgen: I am not learned.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend was talking as if he were. Does he think it was wrong in 1978 or whenever it was to reduce the number of peremptory challenges from seven to three?

Mr. Budgen: It is entirely a matter of balance and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West would say, about the sense of justice of the community.

A limited right of peremptory challenge upholds the sense of justice that the community has in the random nature of the jury, which we must preserve at all costs. By obliterating the right of peremptory challenge, we will damage the random nature of the jury and undermine the sense of justice that the community has in the jury system.

We can get angry about the decision in the Ponting case, but that is an example of the residual power of the jury to say, "Never mind what the law is or what the judge says, we intend to enter a verdict of not guilty." I say, as a narrow lawyer, that that is a scandalous verdict. None the less, as a citizen who does not wish to see mob violence or the West Indian population out on the streets, I say that it is better that we have an occasional verdict such as that in the Ponting case than that we should have mobs on the streets of Wolverhampton.

Mr. Favell: It is all very well to talk about justice, but is it not correct that the accused is not interested in justice but in getting off, and that that is why he is in favour of peremptory challenge?

Mr. Budgen: It is true that both the accused and his counsel are interested in getting him off, and the barrister who works the system within the limits of the law is perfectly justified. But there is a wider consideration of the sense of justice that is felt by the public, as expressed by the black man in a pub in Wolverhampton, who says, "I am not going on the streets tomorrow or into the Mander centre to make a nuisance of myself because Mr. Bloggs, who has been accused of attacking a policeman, will be tried by a randomly selected jury, selected in part by peremptory challenge." He says — although he really does not understand what he is saying — "I trust in the jury system."

The jury system, for all its defects and inconsistencies, is as much a part of our institutions as the House of Commons. We should not tamper with the jury system any more than we would tamper with the House of Commons.

Mr. Jessel: "Trial by Jury", by Gilbert and Sullivan, starts with the usher enjoining the jury to be free from bias. He sings:

"With stern judicial frame of mind
From bias free of every kind,
This trial must be tried."

The verse begins:

"Now, Jurymen, hear my advice—
All kinds of vulgar prejudice
I pray you set aside."

A juryman echoes:

"From bias free of every kind,
This trial must be tried."

A little later the judge speaks of his early career at the Bar and sings:

"All thieves who could my fees afford
Relied on my orations
And many a burglar I've restored
To his friends and his relations."

These days, a barrister who wishes to restore a burglar to his friends and relations has no need to rely solely on

[Mr. Jessel]

his power of oration, his forensic skill or his legal knowledge. He has a fourth weapon—to tamper with the composition of the jury, and that is frequently done. I am glad that the Government have decided to act. Trial by jury in Crown courts has become distorted.

Mr. Alex Carlile: What is the hon. Gentleman's evidence that trials have become distorted as a result of the use of peremptory challenge? I defy him to produce any evidence.

Mr. Jessel: I produce it now. This is an account by Mr. Bray of the meeting of counsel before the Cyprus secrets trial. He says:

"A meeting was called for Sunday 14th for all Counsel to be present . . . The meeting was called for 9.35 and all Counsel save Colin Pitt attended"—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is quite in order for the hon. Gentleman to read this quotation, or better still, to paraphrase it.

Mr. Ashby: Briefly.

9.45 pm

Mr. Jessel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) said that there was no evidence, as did the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), so I am producing it.

Mr. Ashby: It is not evidence.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend is contradicting it, so I shall read it out.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jessel: No. I will not give way. I propose to read this quotation. It is an account of what occurred at a pre-meeting on the Cyprus secrets trial. Mr. Bray says:

"Robin Simpson's point was that we wanted a young, working-class jury. Michael Hill made the comment that he really wanted an anti-establishment jury and that we were better off to have a young middle-age middle-class jury. Robert Harman pointed out that there was a dichotomy of views that we will just take what we get. John Alliot's view was that we couldn't improve on fate. Gilbert Gray indicated that if the jury is not too well educated and is of too low an intelligence, they may take more note of the Judge and therefore we ought to go for people who were young, not unsmart but no women. Victor Durand chimed in by saying that if the jury were young they may be unpatriotic. John Alliott indicated that we ought to pool resources as far any challenges were concerned that Michael Hill pointed out that we ought to challenge one, two, three, by one counsel and so on with another Counsel until we achieved a joint policy."

Mr. Budgen: The irony is that while these very distinguished members of the bar all make these Machiavellian calculations, almost certainly they do not work. The extraordinary thing is that, in spite of people being knocked out by these calculations, the jury comes to a proper decision on the evidence. The difficulty in what my hon. Friend is saying is that if one prevents these peremptory challenges, one undermines general public confidence in the jury system.

Mr. Jessel: There is not enough confidence in the jury system with the frequent use of peremptory challenges. If these very brilliant barristers, leaders in their field, at least one of whom wants to become a High Court judge, spend a Sunday morning in the back room of the Old Bailey planning what kind of jury they want, they must believe that it will have some effect for their clients. Otherwise, why would they do it?

Mr. Ashby *rose*——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentlemen, who are distinguished barristers, would not get away with this sort of behaviour in court.

Mr. Jessel: I will not give way to either of my hon. Friends, because I have given way once to each.

Juries are supposed to be selected at random. The right of challenge existed to try to have an unbiased jury so that, if a juryman was thought to be biased, the defendant could remove that juryman. Now, a system of peremptory challenge is being used to introduce a bias, but a bias towards acquittal. That may be fair to defendants who may be guilty but want to be acquitted, but it is not fair to the general public who want to be protected against vicious and violent crime.

Mr. Chris Smith: The hon. Gentleman says that this is being done to introduce a bias towards a defendant. That is patently not true. A Crown prosecution service survey shows that, where peremptory challenges were used, 60 per cent. of the cases resulted in conviction, whereas 53 per cent. of cases where peremptory challenge was not used resulted in convictions. The evidence is against the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jessel: It seems to me that 60 per cent. is a rather low rate of conviction. It is as if the police were fighting against vicious and violent crime with one hand tied behind their back.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend seems to have a touching faith in the effectiveness of the judgment of members of the bar. I accept, of course, that members of the bar try to rig the juries, but the fact is that they do not succeed.

Mr. Jessel: Well, it seems to me quite wrong that, if justice is intended to be paramount, they should have the right to try to rig the juries. That seems almost self-evident, and I hope that the House will support the abolition of peremptory challenge.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I support my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and criticise new clause 9 as being thoroughly unhelpful. It was the Labour party in 1977, I believe, that reduced the number of peremptory challenges from seven to three.

My main contention is that the peremptory challenge has been abused—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has only just got to his feet.

Mr. Bruinvels: The peremptory challenge has been substantially abused; there has been a case in which multiple defendants have appeared in the dock and the entire jury has been removed through peremptory challenge. That is perfectly proper, but I do not think that it is the best way forward to get a proper random jury. It is not random at all with this peremptory challenge.

As far back as 17 April, column 1008, I raised with the Prime Minister during Prime Minister's Question Time my concern at the very high acquittal rate in trials by jury. I expressed the fear that not all jurors today were respecting law and order, and I went on to say that I did not believe

that all those jurors saw anything wrong in breaking the law. I highlighted the point to the Prime Minister that I felt very much that a number of jurors were deliberately acquitting rather than convicting. I asked her to introduce random selection—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the hon. Gentleman a fair hearing. Everybody else has had a fair hearing.

Mr. Bruinvels: I asked the Prime Minister if she would introduce a new process whereby there would be a genuinely random selection of jurors. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed with this, referred to the White Paper on criminal justice and very much supported that line.

On 9 July 1986 my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, in answer to a private notice question made it quite clear that the peremptory challenge was to be abolished, and that was particularly welcome. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) is making such a noise, Mr. Speaker, that I give way to him, under pressure.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend accept that some people who are tried by jury just may be innocent? Does he not consider that the fact that there is a higher conviction rate where there has been peremptory challenge destroys his argument and the basis of his question to the Prime Minister?

Mr. Bruinvels: My argument is certainly never destroyed and I shall seek to prove this by the high acquittal rate, which I shall reveal in a moment.

Peremptory challenge has been widely criticised as not bringing about a truly representative jury. I feel very strongly that the juries, even as selected now at random, are not ideal. I make no criticism of the role of defence counsel, who do everything in their power to get accused people acquitted. Some may be innocent, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West has said. Nevertheless, it is a horses for courses syndrome at the moment. They do not like establishment figures. Those carrying *The Daily Telegraph* or the *Financial Times* are the ones most likely to be kicked off juries, because they are more liable to convict. I feel that defence counsel have been interfering wrongly with the random nature of juries.

I am pleased that the peremptory challenge is being abolished, except for cause — the removal of certain jurors for stated reasons—which will remain. In our free and democratic system we must have a genuine right to a free trial by 12 good men and true, by 12 of one's peers, 12 fellow citizens. There is no doubt that defence counsel have been manipulating the system to secure an acquittal purely by challenging the appearance, ethnic origin or sex of a particular juror.

I feel that all people should be able to be advised in advance that they may or may not be liable for jury service. I agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on one thing only; perhaps juries at the moment are not totally random. In other words, perhaps they are not a complete cross-section of society in general. I think that fewer people should be excluded from service. For example, small business men should still be able to serve as jurors. If we gave such people plenty of notice—for example, three months—that they will be liable to jury service, we would get a truly representative jury. I would like to see more professional people on juries. That is not always possible.

I believe that there should be a morality and loyalty test before jurors are allowed to serve—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair to the hon. Gentleman for private conversations to continue while he is making a point.

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to start speaking on this new clause about a morality and loyalty test? I submit that it has absolutely nothing to do with the clause. It is just an absurd flight of fancy of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Speaker: Every hon. Gentleman makes his speech in his own way.

Mr. Bruinvels: We are talking about challenging jurors. I would have thought that even the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) would have understood that a morality test is one way of challenging whether a potential juror is the right person.

People liable for jury service should be checked to find out whether they believe in punishment. That is particularly important.

On 9 July 1986, during a statement by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, I revealed the acquittal rate at Snaresbrook and Leicester. It was far too high in Snaresbrook where the rate was 58·2 per cent. and at Leicester it was 15·5 per cent. *[Interruption.]* I put it to the House then and I put it to the House now, even though the Opposition do not necessarily want to hear it, that it is a shocking indictment of our jury system that we have such a high acquittal rate. Either the prosecution were not good at presenting their case, the jurors did not believe the evidence, or rather, in my belief, they did not want to believe the evidence and deliberately let people off the hook. That is unacceptable. I have been calling since then for a total reform of the jury system and of the way in which jurors are selected. I raised that point on 24 June 1986 with my hon. Friend the Minister of State.

I am particularly pleased that the age limit for jurors is to be raised. On 24 July 1986, column 388, I asked my right hon. Friend if he would consider doing that. It was not a planted question and I was particularly pleased with the answer. If we are to have a truly representative and balanced jury we need some of our elderly citizens on it as well. By increasing the age of potential jurors to 70, 2 million extra people will be eligible for jury service. That is to be welcomed.

I ask to see a truly genuine and representative jury, hearing all people who are brought before the court on any charge. I believe that the peremptory challenge has done a lot to undermine British natural justice. It is for that reason that I support my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and ask the House to throw out new clause 9.

Mr. Lawrence: I shall vote for new clause 9 and against the Government, because after 25 years in the criminal courts with juries, I believe that the Government's proposal is nonsense. The reasons are easy to understand for anybody who practises in the criminal courts, but may not immediately be obvious to anyone who does not.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Criminal Justice Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Lightbown.]*

The House divided: Ayes 253, Noes 161.

Division No. 130] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Straff'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, Matthew
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*

Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Lawrence: I shall vote against the Government. Clause 86 is nonsense, because it abolishes for no justifiable reason a procedure which achieves faster, fairer justice and which costs practically nothing. My right hon. Friend is making a stick with which to beat himself and the criminal justice system. He may well come to regret it.

What is a peremptory challenge? I am astonished to find, when I talk to some of my hon. Friends and colleagues who are most vociferous against the peremptory challenge, that they have not the faintest idea what it is. I shall explain. At the beginning of a trial a jury is brought in. The jurors take the oath and stand in the witness box. If nobody challenges them, the 12 become the jury, but if counsel for the defence gets up and says, "Challenge" that juryman stands down and somebody else comes forward, takes the oath and, if unchallenged, stays.

Under our existing law that procedure can take place only three times. Each defendant—most trials are single defendant trials — has only three challenges. The defendant who challenges a juryman has no idea of the juryman's name, his occupation, where he comes from or his beliefs. All that he has succeeded in doing is removing somebody who, until the moment of challenge, was to be a juror.

10.15 pm

One must consider how little pain and suffering are involved in the procedure by which, in a few minutes, we secure a jury to try a case. In most of the cases in which I have been involved, no juror has been challenged. Most of the time, in most courts there is no peremptorry challenge. One does not challenge a juror if a jury has been together and, by breaking them up, one will irritate them or set them going in any way against oneself or one's client. There are strong reasons for not making peremptory challenges.

How does it help to secure justice by having a peremptory challenge? The point is that an accused who has been in custody for 12 months may well go into the dock to be tried, believing that everything is fixed against him. The one safety valve that he has is, through his counsel, to relieve himself of two or three jurors who he may believe have been put there by the prosecution to secure his conviction. When that matter is dealt with, he is happy and content that he has exercised his right to break up a jury which might have been rigged against him.

I assume that the House has read all the evidence that has been adduced on the matter. I remind the House of what the Criminal Bar Association has had to say about the peremptory challenge. It said:

"We remain implacably opposed to the abolition."

Lawyers do not have anything to gain by the peremptory challenge. With the right to a peremptory challenge, choosing a jury takes minutes, not hours. If it took hours to choose a jury, thereof would be more work for lawyers. In a sense, it is contrary to their financial interests.

I should prefer to accept the advice of the experts than that of some of my hon. Friends and colleagues in this place who have never been inside a court of law and would not know how to get into or out of one if they were shown the front door of the Old Bailey. The Criminal Bar Association said:

"During the last 25 years we know of stories that may be apocryphal but nevertheless disturbing of judges and court clerks keeping convicting juries together for another case."

It is precisely because of such stories that accused people sometimes think that the system is rigged against them.

This is a cheap and relatively painless way—it may irritate one or two jurors who are challenged, but they go next door and are called for the next jury—of ensuring that someone who is accused of a crime can feel that the system is not weighted against him and that he will have a fair trial. He will then co-operate. He will sit in the dock throughout the trial. He could make a noise, cause a disturbance and be taken down to the cells. He can disrupt

[Mr. Lawrence]

the progress of the trial, but he does not do so if he is content that he is getting a fair trial. In a small way, the right, which he seldom exercises, to challenge three jurors is his safety valve. It guarantees for him that he will have a fair trial. If he uses his right to challenge three jurors, whose names, addresses, occupations and propensities he does not know, so what?

If I were a black man and I were being tried for a serious crime and the jury was all white, I might very well want a black man on the jury, and why should I not have? If I were a man and I were being tried by a jury of 12 women, I might very well want a man on the jury, and why should I not have? If I were a young person and everybody on the jury was 50 or 60, I might very well want a young person on the jury, and why should I not have? If by getting those people on the jury I feel that the trial will be fair and that I have a chance, the system of justice works. It does not work as long as there is bitterness in any accused person who thinks that the system is rigged against him. That is why it is patently clear to anybody who practises in the courts that this is a faster and fairer means of selecting a jury.

The reason why the stick will be made for my right hon. Friend's back is that nobody is postulating that the man must have the 12 jurors who go into the jury box at the start. Everybody is agreeing that he shall have the right to challenge a juryman for cause. I have heard the most appalling nonsense this evening about how a peremptory challenge can tailor a jury. All that that does is to get somebody who looks a bit better than the man who has just been challenged. That is not tailoring the jury.

Let me tell the House what tailoring the jury is. Tailoring a jury is what happens if someone is challenged for cause. Tailoring a jury is what they do in the United States. Tailoring a jury is when a juryman is asked to stand up and say where he lives, how old he is, where he worships, what he thinks about blacks and young people. That is what goes on in American courts, and as a result it takes a day or two to choose a jury. It takes five minutes in an English court. More time can be spent tailoring a jury when jurors can be challenged for cause than trying a case.

If our trials, instead of lasting one, two or three days, start lasting one, two or three weeks because we have challenges for cause instead of the three peremptory challenges, where have we gained? Where will our system of justice be if cases come on more slowly because the queue is even longer? The very problems that my right hon. Friend and the Government are facing is delays in our courts, yet here we are coolly, calmly and deliberately introducing a measure that will increase the delays in our courts, increase the queues of people waiting for justice, make sure that witnesses have more time to forget their evidence and that more of the guilty are acquitted—the very reverse of all that we are trying to do.

I am not saying that that will happen in every case, of course it will not, but it will happen more often than it happens now if we get rid of this simple means of challenging jurors by three peremptory challenges.

There is another reason why an unfairness might exist in the new clause. The right to challenge jurors without cause is being abolished, but nothing is said of the Crown's right to stand by. Presumably, the Crown will have the right to challenge jurors, but the defendant will not. The Crown will have the right to say, "Stand by. I do not want him. I do not like the look of him." What is the defendant to feel about justice when the prosecution has a right of which the defence is deprived? That is another reason why the accused person will be worried and why he may be unsatisfied with the system of justice that is trying him.

Mr. Budgen: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will deal with a point which I am sure my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has very much in mind. If large sections of the community do not have a sense of the justice of the jury system, that, unfortunately—we all of us want to do our best to oppose this—leads to riots, various forms of marches and all the rest because people do not trust our existing institutions, which, for a variety of reasons, most of which are entirely illogical, have the majesty of mystery attached to them. Is that not a good reason to try to stick to what is already working, rather than to interfere for spurious and logical reasons?

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend made his point in his speech, and now he has made it again in another speech. It is a perfectly valid point, and I have nothing to add to it. I do not wish to exaggerate my point. Whether it leads to race riots is beyond the reasonable ken of my objection to the measure.

I have said all that I have to say. The Government have introduced a nonsensical measure. They are trying to give the impression — there is no need, because they are doing enough for law and order in all other directions— that they are taking dynamic action against an evil in our system, namely, the practice of tampering with juries. The measure is ill-conceived and misunderstood. It has the support of no one apart from one or two of my colleagues who are more loyal to the Government that I can be. It does not have the support of many practitioners at the criminal Bar. It is dangerous.

My advice to the Government is, "For goodness sake, leave the present position well alone. Drop it, and accept the new clause that has been sensibly tabled by the Opposition." It breaks my heart to have to say that, but the Opposition seem to understand the workings of the criminal legal system better than does my right hon. Friend. The Government's over-enthusiasm for the cause will be utterly counter-productive, and they will end up doing far more harm than good.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I shall be extremely brief. I have sat and listened for some time to various hon. and learned Gentlemen on the Conservative Benches. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) speaks with both practical and other experience. What he says is perfectly correct, and I endorse every word. I contrast it with the garbage—I put it as simply as that — uttered by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who has absolutely no knowledge of these matters. His trite, inane and vote-grabbing comments are a disgrace to the House. In the interests of justice, I hope that Conservative Members will listen to the sane, experienced voice of the hon. and learned Member for Burton, and will vote accordingly.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): As our discussions on the Bill have progressed — from long before Second Reading to the Standing Committee, and thence to this evening's debate — I have come to understand the deep affection in which peremptory challenge is held. Let me say rather

emphatically that I do not mean that it is held in affection by the public; I refer to the practitioners in the courts who have advanced the case again this evening. No one who supports the Government's position — certainly no Minister — has any criticism of the way in which the practitioners have exercised a right that is now theirs.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Why change it?

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would allow me to continue for a second.

I do not think that the Cyprus trial — or any other trial — or anecdotes of what happened on a particular occasion, or did not, are relevant. However, I feel that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) deserved a rather fairer hearing, considering his persistence in the matter over many months. The points that he made this evening probably more accurately reflected the opinion of most of our constituents than the points made in challenge to him.

I believe that the real distinction is between those who wish for mechanisms that construct or engineer particular kinds of jury and those who, like myself, feel that the simplest and fairest way is to take a jury as it comes. Some hon. Members who have opposed the Government tonight have said that the peremptory challenge is effective, producing a fairer jury. Others — notably my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) — have said that that is an illusion. We must take both limbs of that contradictory argument in favour of the new clause.

In Committee the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) said:

"I congratulate the Home Secretary on the use of the word 'engineering'; it is better than 'construction', which I used earlier. The jury should reflect the defendant's world." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 3 March 1987; c. 841.]

To some extent we are retracing our footsteps in Standing Committee, but if we are to try to reflect the defendant's world, peremptory challenge is a very blunt engineering tool with which to do it. If the objective is to secure a delicate balance on the jury, or to make sure that the jury is fully representative, the whole system is faulty and peremptory challenge will not put it right. However, the supporters of the new clause are aiming in that direction.

10.30 pm

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to peremptory challenge achieving a completely fair and balanced jury. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) said that we must aim at achieving a representative jury. However, the serious as opposed to the cynical advocates of peremptory challenge have never been able to show how peremptory challenge achieves that objective. Clearly it does not.

Peremptory challenge may secure that a person who represents a defendant's interests sits on the jury in place of the challenged juror, but it does so in a purely haphazard way. That is not the objective of peremptory challenge. It is designed to take off the jury a person to whom the defendant objects without a reason having to be given. If we want completely fair and balanced juries, representative juries and juries that reflect the defendant's world, peremptory challenge does not achieve that purpose.

Mr. Ashby: How would my right hon. Friend achieve a balanced jury? The random selection process does not achieve a balanced jury; it results, as I said earlier, in a row of people from Acacia avenue. How would my right hon. Friend achieve the balanced and representative jury that is so desirable?

Mr. Hurd: I should not attempt to do so, because I believe, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, in the random principle. I would not, however, base my case on the Tory appeal to mystery. Nevertheless, juries are selected on a random basis. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West is trying to tinker with the system, but his attempt is rather ineffective. He has not been able to show that peremptory challenge produces a representative jury.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): My right hon. Friend has referred to the random system of jury selection and to the defendant having to take the jury as he finds it. But it does not work like that. In some cases there is jury vetting, and the defendant feels that the whole system is stacked against him.

Mr. Hurd: I shall be turning to that question later.

As for the speech of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), may I say at the outset that the smile on my face was simply in admiration of his skills in turning an intervention against him to his advantage. Let me be patronising to him in response to his rather patronising approach; he was prompted to say that the law should be made by lawyers. There was a trace of that, too, in the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). If we were to rely solely on the advice and opinions of lawyers in forming the statute book of this country, it would be very different from what it is today, and I do not believe that it would be better.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery deployed skilfully his basic point. He is one of the serious defenders of the right to peremptory challenge, but he left the Chamber too early to hear the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, who purported to speak on the same side but who torpedoed that argument.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury attempted to deal with the statistics. I am not a statistician and I do not think that he is. I do not think that any statistician would have dealt with the statistics in the same way as the hon. Gentleman. The statistics do not and cannot tell us anything about the effects of peremptory challenge because they do not tell us anything about the nature of the cases where peremptory challenge was used.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman had better let me finish my argument before he tries to destroy it.

If peremptory challenge was more often used in cases where the defendant's case was fairly hopeless, obviously that would produce the figures quoted by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury. That is why I said perfectly fairly upstairs in Committee — and repeat again today — that no argument can be based either way on that set of statistics. Before the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) leaps to his feet, he will concede that I have never based the case on statistics or on anecdote. I have based the case on what I believe to

[Mr. Hurd]

be principles of logic and common sense. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton that common sense is the most important basis.

Mr. Kaufman: If the Home Secretary is stating that the statistics are not relevant to the debate and do not assist us, why did he have the survey undertaken and why did he tell us that it was essential that we have the statistics available for when we debated this clause?

Mr. Hurd: I undertook to have the survey carried out very early on in response to the original initiative proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham. The survey was carried out and the statistics were available. The right hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that I have never based the argument on the statistics for the reasons that I have just given. The statistics show that this practice is quite widespread and that it is more widespread in London than elsewhere. However, they do not and cannot show the effects.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery dealt with their fears about challenge for cause. It is argued that as night follows day we would see an expansion of the use of the challenge for cause. There is the terrifying scenario of lengthy interrogation of potential jurors about their personal circumstances and beliefs. I cannot see the basis for that fear. Current case law and practice militates against that and there can be no serious doubt about that. The extent to which our judiciary would be likely to change current practice is a matter upon which I cannot speculate. However, we have kept senior members of the judiciary fully aware of our present proposals. I see no grounds, from what the judiciary have already said, to suppose that it would open the gates to the kind of challenges for cause that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton are so concerned about.

Mr. Alex Carlile: How is the Home Secretary going to stop the challenges for cause? Defence counsel has an absolute right to stand up in front of the judge and make whatever submissions he wishes. How will the Home Secretary stop those submissions?

Mr. Hurd: If the practice of the judiciary continues as it is at present, those submissions will be fruitless.

Mr. Lawrence: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I will give way in a second.

If they are fruitless, and are seen continually to be fruitless, they will not be repeated.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the reason why the practice hitherto has been not to challenge for cause is that there has been the right to peremptory challenge and that has satisfied everyone?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, I understand that. However, I do not understand the logic of saying that if we do away with peremptory challenge, the judges and the courts will change the current practice and allow a continuous series of challenges for cause on grounds that they would not admit today.

Mr. Budgen: It is true that, as my right hon. Friend said, constant challenges for cause would be fruitless. No doubt the judge would turn them down. But the fact is that they undermine the random nature of the jury. I am sure that my right hon. Friend agrees that the general confidence of the public in the jury system is vital. A system that allows anti-establishment lawyers constantly to bring forward complaints for cause and to have them turned down by the judge, so that they can then complain to the media that they were involved in an unfair trial, has the effect of undermining the validity of the trial.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is always ingenious, but I do not think that that is probable. I do not think that lawyers, of whatever persuasion, will go on bouncing up and down, making challenges for cause of a kind that it is the court's practice continually to reject.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton was not on the Standing Committee, and there is no reason why he should have followed our discussions about stand-by. I entirely accept, as I did on Second Reading, that the Government's proposal has implications for the use of the prosecution right of stand-by. In Committee, I circulated draft guidance to prosecuting authorities restricting the use of stand-by to cases of terrorism or national security in which jury checks are authorised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General or, exceptionally, where a manifestly unfit person should be excused with the minimum of embarrassment.

If my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South-West study the restrictive nature that we now propose for the use of stand-by, which is of a quite different character and, in any case, is must less often used than the right of peremptory challenge, they will see that we have dealt with that as fairly as we can.

The Government's case is that peremptory challenge is not effective in creating a jury which reflects the defendant's world. The question is whether the tilt to the system away from random selection continues to be justified. Of course, I believe that the tilt was justified in the days when the system in other respects could be said to be unfair to the defendant, but I do not believe that that is so today.

We are left with the main plea of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West, which was backed by other hon. Members, that, whatever the merits of peremptory challenge, it has the merit that it leaves the defendant with the idea that he has had a fair trial. But there is another side to the argument. The wider public interest and wider public confidence in the system must be considered as well. There are many grounds on which defendants who are found guilty object to trial. I know that because I receive many letters from people who are in prison having been found guilty when they think that they should not have been. But I do not think that it is very probable that this argument would rate highly among them.

Of course, the attempted tilt is to the defendant. I do not understand the argument which denies that. Here we have a change which the Government propose which is not revolutionary or radical. I entirely accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West. One of the purposes of being a Tory is that one believes that change should be "gradual", to use his word, slow and organic and should come down through the ages. That is exactly what has happened here. We used to have 35 peremptory challenges. Then it was reduced to seven. No doubt, the profession was keen that nothing

should be done and thought that there was magic in the word "seven", yet it was reduced to three. Obviously, through the years Parliament has felt that, as the system as a whole becomes fairer to the defendant, this tilt in favour of the defendant is no longer necessary. We propose a strengthening of the jury system. This is a strengthing of the random principle which lies at the heart of the jury system. It is the slow, organic conclusion of a process which has been going on for a long time. That is why I recommend that the House should not accept the new clause.

Mr. Chris Smith: We have had a long and, at times, serious debate on a serious matter that lies at the heart of the Bill. There have been some interesting speeches, particularly from the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), who set out some of the kernel of the argument on this issue.

Other comments filled me with considerable anxiety, for example those of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who said that because some members of juries did not respect law and order there were too many acquittals. I urge the hon. Gentleman to think carefully about what he said, because it did not do justice to members of juries or to the criminal justice system. We in the Labour party certainly wish to do that.

10.45 pm

Hon. Members have referred to the fact that in the 1970s the Labour Government limited the right of peremptory challenge from seven to three. In the disingenuous words of the Home Secretary, all that the Government are doing is furthering the process of organic change, adjusting to further realities and tilting the system a little more. There is a world of qualitative between reducing the number of challenges available from seven to three and abolishing the right altogether. When the reduction took place, Labour Members made it clear that they were not supporting abolition.

The Home Secretary also said that peremptory challenge does not achieve a balanced or representative jury, and he is right. The use of peremptory challenge does not necessarily achieve that, but nor does the present supposedly random system. Sometimes that system has thrown up a perceptibly imbalanced, unrepresentative jury. In those cases, there must be some recourse to the defendant without having to go through an enormous, elaborate procedure of challenging for cause, which, as the hon. and learned Member for Burton warned us, may lead to days of wrangles in the courtrooms. There must be some provision for the defendant to ensure that at least there is one woman, man or black person on the jury so that he feels he is being tried fairly.

The Home Secretary said that the statistics did not tell us much, but they drive a coach and horses through the argument of the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) that juries subject to peremptory challenge let off defendants. The evidence on that is clear. The Home Secretary is right in saying that the statistical difference between 60 and 53 per cent. of convictions does not tell us much about the success or failure of peremptory challenge to select a jury which is more or less minded to listen to the defendant.

The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) got close to the truth in an intervention when he said that surely we should recognise that this is a hit-or-miss operation. He went on to ask, "If it is a hit-or-miss operation, why have it?" I will answer that in a moment.

The other side of the coin is that one could ask, equally validly, "Why remove it if it is a hit-or-miss operation?" If that lands us with a jury that is just as likely to acquit or to convict as the jury that existed in the first place, and if the defendant believes that it has enabled him to be subject to a fairer system, there are no valid grounds for removing that option or chance. That is the crucial point.

The Home Secretary said that peremptory challenge puts a tilt in the system away from the random. He asked whether that assists the defendant. It does not necessarily assist the defendant, but it gives him a sense of fairness of the process. We are talking about a perception of justice or injustice when we put this new clause before the House. We believe that peremptory challenge should be retained and that the defendant should be assured, and have the perception, that the system has treated him or her fairly. We believe that the Home Secretary is wrong to remove peremptory challenge. We have, therefore, tabled this new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:
The House divided: Ayes 69, Noes 176.

Division No. 131] **[10.50 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Budgen, Nick
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Conlan, Bernard
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Ground, Patrick
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hayes, J.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Michie, William
Nellist, David
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Matthew
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gerald Bermingham and
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia

Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Sir Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 10

COMPENSATION FOR CLOTHING

'In the case of a claim under section 78(1)*(a)* compensation shall be payable for loss or damage to clothing or personal adjuncts of the claimant.'.—*[Mr. Kaufman.]*

Brought up and read the First time.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 11—*Character and way of life*—

'In deciding whether to withhold or reduce compensation on the grounds of a claimant's character, way of life or conduct in which he has engaged at any time the Board shall take into account any relevant criminal offences of which he has been convicted but shall not take into account his lawful behaviour, race, sex, political or religious beliefs or sexuality.'.

New clause 12—*Minimum compensation levels*—

'The Secretary of State shall not make an order under section 81(1) which reduces the minimum award of compensation to less than £150.'.

New clause 13—*Compensation for police officers*—

'Any police officer who sustains an injury while attempting in the course of his duties to enforce the law shall be eligible for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.'.

Mr. Kaufman: We now come to what, from the point of view of the Government's policy, is the shoddiest part of this Bill. Two weeks ago the Government gave away billions of pounds in an attempt to bribe the electorate in the general election whenever it comes. In this part of the Bill they are saving tiny amounts of money at the cost of victims of crime of small means and also at the cost of members of the police forces of this country. I find it remarkable that it is possible for the Government to resist amendments which will afford victims of unpleasant crimes small amounts of compensation which could make a very great difference to their lives.

This new clause would entitle those suffering criminal injuries to compensation for loss of or damage to clothing or personal adjuncts. We are not saying here that we want people of ample means to be recompensed for the loss of expensive garments. That is not the implication of what we are proposing. We are not proposing that the state, through the public purse, should compensate people for what insurance policies ought to be able to put right; nor are we saying that, even when insurance is not available, people whose means are considerable should be recompensed in order to obtain new clothes in place of older clothes which have been damaged or destroyed as a result of a criminal assault.

We are saying that, by the very nature of things, by the very nature of the large numbers of violent crimes in the country today, a considerable number of people of very modest means are going to lose the clothes which they have on their backs, which are the only clothes available to them.

I do not know about Conservative Members, but I certainly know about my own constituents. Whenever I go about parts of my constituency I am deeply depressed at the patent poverty of my constituents as demonstrated by the clothes that they wear. If one goes around many of the wards in my constituency and sees the unemployed people or people living on supplementary benefit—one-parent families, elderly people, pensioners—the extent to which they are no longer able to dress as well as they used to is clear. Their clothes are often old; their clothes are often drab; their clothes, despite their best efforts to keep them in good repair, have seen better days a long time ago.

That sort of person in my constituency is more liable to be a victim of a crime of violence than people of greater affluence because, despite any views or legends to the contrary, it is the poorer people who are predominantly the victims of crime and it is the poorer people in the inner city areas such as I represent who are most likely to be the victims of violent crime.

Again and again it happens that somebody who is a victim of a crime of violence has his or her only available clothes damaged beyond repair. We regard it as regrettable that it is not going to be open to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to compensate such people by giving them the cost of a new set of clothes, a new jacket, skirt, coat, pair of shoes or whatever it might be. Therefore, I am depressed that the Government have so far been unwilling to make the sort of concession that the clause requests.

As I have said, it is not that the money is not available. The money is there in enormous quantities and money is being handed out in tuppenny tax reliefs all over the country. A minute fraction of the tuppenny tax relief is all that is required to fulfil the aim of this new clause. Therefore, I hope that the Government will no turn it down but will say that they recognise that there is an important case.

New clause 11 is a different sort of clause, one with which we are seeking to rectify a serious shortcoming in the Bill as it stands. The Bill has a provision that limits eligibility for criminal injuries compensation. I refer the House to clause 79(2)*(b)*, which states that the board shall have powers to refuse to award compensation or reduce compensation

"where they consider that the making of any or, as the case may be, a full award of compensation would be inappropriate having regard to the claimant's character, his way of life or the conduct in which he is engaged at any time."

Of course, we are not saying that where somebody has been guilty of a criminal offence he should necessarily be eligible for criminal injuries compensation. However, it seems that a subjective view of merit for compensation is not one that is appropriate for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to take.

We do not believe that somebody should have his eligibility for criminal injuries compensation limited or removed because of his race. We do not believe that that should be so because of his sex or because of his political beliefs. We believe that a Communist or even—I will say it—a member of the National Front has as much right to obtain compensation for criminal injuries as anybody in what one might call the main stream of British political life. We certainly do not believe that there should be discrimination on the basis of religious belief, even if that claimed religious belief is minority, unconventional or unpopular. I do not believe that somebody who is, for example a Moonie, should be deprived of eligibility for criminal injuries compensation if he has been a victim of a criminal assault. I do not believe that anybody should be deprived of compensation on account of their sexual preferences. Sexual preferences in this country are all lawful, provided they are carried out within the law.

[Mr. Kaufman]

That being so, I do not believe that there ought to be any subjective assessment of merit with regard to eligibility for criminal injuries compensation but that the test should be simply whether the criteria applying to eligibility are fulfilled by the applicant. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will accept that, in order to clarify beyond doubt the obligations upon the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

11.15 pm

We come to new clause 12, in which we seek to lower the floor for criminal injuries compensation. Of all the obnoxious actions which the Government have taken in recent years, possibly the most obnoxious was when, at the time of the autumn statement last year, they raised this floor from £400 to £550. They did this—even if they did not admit it, the Green Paper on criminal injuries compensation admitted it — simply in order to save money. When the lower limit was increased to £400 from 1 February 1983, the Green Paper, the report of an interdepartmental working party, said that this was the first time it had been increased in real terms. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) had raised it simply to maintain it in real terms, but this was the first time, said the working party, that it had been increased in real terms.

The report was quite open and honest about why it was done:

"the aim being to contain the cost of the Scheme by excluding a greater number of cases involving only minor injury and loss".

That is what the Government did again, when they raised the floor from £400 to £550 last autumn. What does it mean? It means that the Government have reduced by about a quarter the number of those who are eligible for criminal injuries compensation. They have done so to save the niggardly sum of £2,300,000—because, of course, at the bottom end of the scale aggregate compensation for many thousands of people comes to very small sums of money.

I really do not know how the Prime Minister can, as she did at Torquay a couple of weeks ago, go on about the sadness of criminal injuries victims, when at the same time she herself is depriving victims of the right to compensation, a quarter of them, all for £2,300,000, yet she is giving away billions of pounds to others. So if the Government are not going to accept this amendment, I hope that they will stop whining and moaning in this hypocritical way about their concern for victims, because they are deliberately and specifically removing the eligibility of victims for compensation.

The fourth new clause that we have tabled—No. 13—relates to compensation for police. I believe that the Government have behaved very meanly towards police officers by keeping what was clause 74(7) in this Bill, even though they amended it in Committee. We put some cases to them in Committee. Once again, the Government demonstrated an extraordinarily niggardly attitude towards police officers injured on duty.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who is here, fairly questioned me on Second Reading when I criticised what was then clause 74(7). I was saying that we would move—as we did in Committee—for the deletion of that clause, the clause that then excluded from compensation, and now limits the eligibility for compensation of not only serving police officers but other people who serve the public in positions of hazard and danger.

We said that we would move to delete that clause, and the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds said:

"I should like him"—

that was me—

"to be precise. Is he saying that he will return to the present position—that where police officers take exceptional risks they should receive compensation—or is he saying that he will go all the way back to the position which existed some years ago when that test did not have to be met?" — [*Official Report*, 27 November 1986; Vol. 106, c. 480.]

I replied that we would restore the present position. Because of the increasing incidence of crime it is unfair that there should not be proper compensation for police officers, firemen, ambulance men, security workers, nurses and others who may be involved in hazard in the course of pursuing their duty if it results in injury. In some cases, it can mean limited compensation and in other cases a great deal, because the injuries may be very serious.

In Committee I was questioned by Ministers about the difference between injuries. The Minister of State said:

"The right hon. Gentleman must understand that although, as I hope I have made clear, the accident must be concerned with the matters which he discusses, it could mean that somebody running along perfectly flat ground to prevent somebody from riding a bicycle on a pavement could qualify under the scheme. That would not be right." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 24 February 1987; c. 769.]

I asked why it would not be right. If somebody is attempting to stop a crime, and particularly if he is involved in pursuit, is he to think twice about whether he will go that next step in case he is injured and will not be compensated for it? Of course people will not do that. A person carrying out that service to the community does not think as he pursues a criminal or a potential criminal, "Shall I stop running now because I might not get compensation?" The spirit of public service is too great for that. It is deplorable that the Government should not respond to our wish to have this rectified.

I think the Police Federation made a great mistake in accepting the compromise that the Government offered — that is, to reinstate exceptional risk. If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds advised the federation to accept that, I think he was mistaken in that advice. If the Police Federation had held out for the deletion of that subsection, it would have had our support. If it had said that it was dissatisfied, I do not believe that the Government could have carried the day in Committee or in the House. I am not saying that the hon. Gentleman advised the Police Federation to accept the compromise because I do not know, but if he did, he did not do the police a service because they could and should have got the lot. I still think that they should get the lot. That is why we have tabled the new clause.

Here again the amounts of money at issue are minute; they are a fraction of 0·1 per cent. of the Budget that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced two weeks ago. I cannot understand how it is possible for the Government to say that they have all this money at their disposal and then be so mean as to tell police officers and other public servants injured on duty that they cannot qualify except on the basis of exceptional risk—that being, of course, a subjective concept.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Much of what the right hon. Gentleman says is music to my ears, and I shall listen

carefully to my hon. Friend's reply. When the right hon. Gentleman suggests that the quantum is very small, I hope he has taken account of the fact that in an average year the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board will make awards for as many as 15,000 police officers. For example, during the miners' strike at least that number were eligible for compensation. Can the right hon. Gentleman say when he resumes his speech whether what he has in mind is a statutory compensation scheme or merely a discretionary arrangement of the CICB?

Mr. Kaufman: We are dealing here with what the Bill says, and we can only amend the Bill. I have said—indeed, I said it to the hon. Gentleman when he questioned me—that we believe that there should be a scheme for police officers that is different from the CICB scheme. We believe that a scheme should be built into their contracts of engagement. We believe that it should be an automatic scheme. We believe that it should be a scheme that applies to families where there is loss, and certainly where there is bereavement. We want a different and much more secure scheme, which we would readily negotiate with the Police Federation and other representative bodies of the police forces. But we are not dealing with that here.

We are dealing here with an exclusion and we believe that that exclusion is wrong. I talk here of small amounts of money because that is all that we are dealing with. I have a letter sent to Opposition Members from the Police Federation last November before clause 74(7) was amended by the Committee. It took the view that about 1,500 claims a year were at issue then. Clearly, there will be fewer now, but the smaller the number at issue, the more miserly the Government are shown to be and the more easily it is possible for the Government to provide the compensation with scarcely a waver on the graph of public expenditure. That is why we believe that, now that it has been reduced to this area in this scheme, as distinct from the scheme that the Labour party would introduce, the Government have no excuse for being so recalcitrant on this issue.

That is particularly so because, as I say, since 17 March when we make a request from small amounts of public expenditure the Government cannot say that the money is not there. The fact is that the money was there in huge quantities and the Government have decided to use it for other reasons than to compensate victims of criminal injuries. They have decided to use it in order to hand out a bribe to try to win the general election and be damned to the police whom they say they support and be damned to the victims of crime about whom they say they care. That is why we have tabled this group of amendments.

I can best sum up our view on this by quoting from *The Times* the words of Miss Helen Reeves, director of the Association of Victim Support Schemes. When the raising of the floor was being considered, she said:

> "We are saddened that the Government is to confirm that limit. We would like to see it gradually eroded by inflation. If it is kept up, large numbers of victims will be excluded."

The Government's criminal injuries compensation scheme is being put on a statutory basis, but that scheme is in a huge mess because we have so much more crime and, because of that, more people have become aware of the possibility of compensation.

It is right for the Government to say that applications for criminal injury compensation are growing faster than the level of crime, but that is simply because the public, through being victims of violent crime, are catching up with the possibilities of compensation.

It is a fact that 60,000 people are now awaiting compensation. It is a fact that in 1985-86 30 per cent. of those who had their cases resolved had had to wait for over a year. It is a fact that a year ago at least 11,800 people had had cases pending for over a year. It is a fact that the number of people now awaiting criminal injuries compensation is nearly three times the number who were awaiting it when the Labour Government left office. Some of those people have suffered injuries so unspeakable that it makes me shudder to describe them or even to think about them.

The Government have not done justice to criminal injuries victims. The Minister will talk about the sums of money that the Government are adding to the criminal injuries compensation scheme. I know, because he admitted it in Standing Committee, that he has not got as much as he would have liked; the Treasury has done him down. But, as he admits, all that he is going to be able to do with what he has got is to reduce the queue by 5,000 a year for three years. At the end of those three years, the queue will not even start to be reduced again. What is more, he is not reducing the queue as it will be; he is reducing it as it is now. He may be reducing an existing queue, but he is not reducing a putative later queue.

11.30 pm

Let not the Minister of State—who has done his best, but failed, to obtain decent amounts—say that he is increasing the amount available under the scheme. It is for a limited period, for a limited reason and with limited scope. What we want is hundreds of millions of pounds to be made available under the scheme. Let us suppose that the taxpaying electorate were faced with a choice between adding £500 million to the criminal injuries compensation scheme, and losing a fraction of a penny from their income tax cuts. If there were a referendum tomorrow, I think that they would choose to add £500 million to the scheme.

Mr. Mellor: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we keep a tab of those commitments, which are at present running at £34,000 million. Is that commitment another £500 million to add to Labour's public expenditure plans?

Mr. Kaufman: No. I am saying that, given the choice, I know what choice the people would make. I also say that we shall lower the floor in the way proposed in new clause 12. The amount of additional public expenditure involved will be minute, but a large number of people will be assisted.

The Minister of State had better not make glib interventions like that, when he knows that two weeks ago the Chancellor of the Exchequer could have provided the country with a decent, properly funded, properly functioning, speedily paid criminal injuries compensation scheme, and chose not to, in the hope that—of all things—the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) would be re-elected. That is one of the most grotesque political and expenditure priorities in the history of modern democracy.

Let not the Minister of State say for a moment that the money was not there, and let him not issue glib challenges to us. The challenge is to him. We have four new clauses and every one of them, if put to the electorate, would receive an overwhelming majority in favour.

[Mr. Kaufman]

I reiterate the four things that we want: compensation for loss or damage to clothing or personal adjuncts; no withholding or reduction or compensation on the basis of a claimant's character or way of life; lowering of the floor to £150; and the removal of the exceptional risk proviso from criminal injuries compensation for constables and others injured in the course of their duties.

Mr. Mellor: We have heard the usual endearing display of brazen virtuosity from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). I congratulate him on being able to maintain in such adversity such a sustained attack on the exceptionally generous way in which the Government have dealt with the victims of crime. He knows the facts and the figures cannot be denied. He tried to take the wind out of my sails by saying, "It is no good the Minister of State talking about money." I shall certainly mention it, although I do not intend at this time of night to go over all the ground that we traversed in Standing Committee.

The right hon. Gentleman knows only too well that in the next financial year we shall be spending, in real terms, three and a half times what the Labour Government spent on compensating victims. We will also spend money on victim support schemes. Although they were in existence throughout the lifetime of the Labour Government, they did not receive one penny in Government assistance.

The right hon. Gentleman also knows that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was able to secure no less than £113 million of extra resources for the scheme last October. How that can be portrayed by the right hon. Gentleman as a defeat for the Home Office, I do not know.

The right hon. Gentleman has given the lie to any suggestion that what we are doing is done to save money by drawing attention to one inescapable fact—there is an inevitable backlog of cases, and always will be, when the scheme has to deal seriously with major, traumatic injuries and when hearings are required. That is why, in the world where one has to run things rather than criticise others for running things, we cannot have a scheme which does not concentrate on the real injuries which require major compensation. That is why we have decided to lift the floor.

The right hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot accept new clause 12. He knows that, when the scheme was first introduced in 1964, the base limit was set at what was then three weeks' average wage. That is pretty much the scale we have with £550, which enables us to focus on people with more severe injury. The right hon. Gentleman knows that the pace of the increase of violent crime has been slower throughout the 1980s than it was during the 1970s, but that, for perfectly proper reasons, more people now claim compensation. We go out of our way to ensure, through victim support schemes and citizens advice bureaux, that people know their entitlement to claim under the scheme. No such conscious attempt was made under the Labour Government and, even now, only a minority of victims apply for compensation.

As for new clause 13, the right hon. Gentleman finds himself in the position of, I think, Engels—I am not well up on revolutionaries—who said that one cannot agitate a man with a full belly. The right hon. Gentleman is trying to lead a charge when those who might have supported him have melted away. A perfectly reasonable distinction has been drawn since 1979 about the basis on which compensation should be paid to people who are injured accidentally.

The case that the right hon. Gentleman erected on sand about compensation to police officers relates not to an intentional application of force but to accidental injuries. The Police Federation which, as ever, was sustained in its efforts by the diligent and unswerving efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) properly made representations to us to restore the situation to what it has been recently and what it remains—that there should be compensation when an exceptional risk is taken.

I was interested when the right hon. Gentleman was prepared to say that someone who runs across flat ground to stop someone riding a bicycle on a pavement should receive compensation if he falls and injures himself from a criminal injuries compensation scheme which is designed to compensate people for injuries inflicted on them by criminals. That is taking debating licence too far. However, the right hon. Gentleman is only playing with the issue, as he has made clear. Having made grandiloquent statements about how the public would leap up and down at the prospect of the spending of another £500 million in taxes—those who like to jump up and down at the prospect of paying taxes would have every opportunity to do so once the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) took over Treasury responsibilities, if that were ever to happen—the right hon. Gentleman was asked whether he was to make a pledge or enter into a commitment, but he jumped away from that like a scalded cat, as well he might.

The answer to new clause 13 is that we have entered into an arrangement with the Police Federation which I believe to be, and which I understand it believes to be, entirely satisfactory. On that I must rest.

When it comes to new clause 10, I accept that we are drawing a line in one place when it could have been elsewhere. The right hon. Gentleman knows that such margin as I had, notwithstanding the exceptional additional sums that have been made available for the scheme, was taken away from me—I do not complain about that—by my agreeing to meet the claims of railwaymen who suffer nervous shock as a result of people trying to commit suicide in front of railway trains. That means that the £400,000 that it would cost to compensate for clothing is not available, £800,000 having been made available for railwaymen.

There is a perfectly logical case for the exclusion, but if we are to have a commitment of additional spending by some future Labour Government to compensate for clothing, let us hear it now. The right hon. Gentleman knows that if someone has his clothes ripped as a result of a criminal action, and that is the only damage, there is no basis for a claim. Claims must be based on criminal injuries. However, if an injury lies within the scheme and additionally clothes are damaged, compensation can be obtained for the clothing as well as for the injury.

We do not propose to continue with that provision, for two reasons. First, it seems arbitrary that someone can recover for damage to property merely because they have been physically injured, but not otherwise. That does not seem logical. That is why we shall restrict property claims to personal adjuncts. Secondly, the average payment for damage to clothing has been about £15 to £20 under the scheme, and that is well documented. I am well aware of

the impoverishment of some claimants, although they are only a small minority, but £15 to £20 is hardly a large sum on which to make such a great claim as that which the right hon. Gentleman submitted. There is an ability to apply for exceptional payments if there is no other way in which clothing can be replaced.

It is regrettable that these lines have to be drawn, but it is necessary to do so when formulating a practical scheme. We have taken the view that we should focus on the more serious injuries, and that is what we are doing.

I can offer something positive to the right hon. Gentleman in responding to new clause 11. As I understood the right hon. Gentleman, he is not pushing against the entitlement of the board to make reductions on a basis that is broadly equivalent to the contributory negligence arrangements that prevail in the civil courts. Indeed, the entire scheme proceeds by analogy with claims for personal injuries before the civil courts. It is true that in clause 79 the principal ground for withholding the whole or part of a claim lies within subsection (2)(*c*), which reads:

"that he was not to any extent responsible for the injury to which the claim relates".

Paragraph (*b*) relates to what is already within the rules of the scheme under K—"Character and Way of Life"—which, inter alia, states:

"The applicant's criminal convictions will influence whether the application should be rejected completely or the award reduced because of character and way of life. Any attempts the applicant has made to reform himself should also be taken into consideration."

The passage continues to identify the nature of convictions that would be borne particularly in mind. It is clear that that is more specifically related to convictions than the construction of subsection (2)(*b*) might be.

It is on that basis that we have no wish to enhance the ambit of the arrangements that the board presently applies. I should like to discuss with the chairman of the board the proposal that is contained in new clause 11, and I hope that it will be possible to bring forward some restriction in another place to meet the point that has been raised.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I shall comment briefly on new clause 13, but in doing so I welcome what my hon. Friend the Minister has just said about new clause 11. If his ruminations bear fruit, I shall be interested to see what the Government are able to provide when the Bill goes to another place.

I was fascinated by the speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). I never look a gift horse in the mouth. I assure him that the Police Federation will study very carefully both what he has said and the terms of his new clause. I understand that in it he is offering an all-embracing occupational accident insurance policy. I do not think that any police officer would resist that for one moment. It is uncommonly generous of the right hon. Gentleman to propose it. It would make the police unique—but they are unique. I am happy to accept, for careful study, his generous offer.

11.45 pm

It would have to be built into a new, separate and statutory compensation scheme. The right hon. Gentleman has said on previous occasions as well as tonight that, constrained as he is by the Bill, he can only seek to make improvements within the parameters of this legislation and that if he had the opportunity to do so he would put together an entirely new scheme. I take it that it would be a statutory scheme. The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Police Federation has a number of reservations about that. However, the offer will be studied with care.

In respect of the Police Federation, I regard myself as, above all else, one of the custodians of the Edmund-Davies pay formula. The right hon. Gentleman knows that that pay formula was constructed from a whole series of factors that make the police unique. I refer to the shortage of police officers at the time; to the 24-hour responsibility that they uniquely must bear; to the very severe standards of discipline to which they and their families are exposed; and to the loss of civil liberty, whereby a police officer must, on joining, abandon all trade union and political activities. Above all else, there was built into the formula the risk of hazards on the job. It was to that point that the interdepartmental working party of civil servants drew attention when it made what, I confess, I regarded as the outrageous proposal that found its way into the Bill that we debated on Second Reading.

I should approach any proposals for a new insurance scheme a little charily if it appeared to put at risk or to cut away at the basis of the Edmund-Davies formula, which is constructed on the unique hazards that police officers have to face when doing their job. Whenever there is civil disorder, whether it be at Wapping, or connected with the miners' strike, or elsewhere, very large numbers of police officers suffer severe or minor injuries. I note that the right hon. Gentleman proposes to cover all those injuries. I hope that he has been able to carry with him the Trades Union Congress and his friends in the National Union of Mineworkers. I shall be very interested to hear about that. I am bound, therefore, to welcome all that the right hon. Gentleman has said about an occupational insurance policy that would insure the police against all future accidents.

It is a disgrace that the original proposals should have been jumped out of an interdepartmental working party report into the Bill, without any consultation. It was quite proper that the Police Federation should immediately protest. On behalf of the federation I entered into negotiations with the Home Office. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister of State behaved in an entirely civilised manner. They recognised the problem, accepted that the policy was a mistake, and returned to the previous position. The Police Federation's view is bound to be that it struck a bargain with the Government, and in the circumstances it will not go back on that bargain. It is grateful to the Home Secretary for what he has done. In all the circumstances—as the right hon. Member for Gorton will understand—the federation's best position is to take what it can from the Government and be grateful for that, but to look very carefully at the proposals made by the right hon. Member for Gorton.

Mr. Kaufman: The debate has confirmed my view that the Police Federation was badly advised in the decision that it made. If the implication of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is that he was a participant in that process and an adviser to the federation, I believe that he advised the federation badly, because the federation could and should have received more. It should not have settled for what it agreed in the end. Public sympathy was rightly with the police,

[Mr. Kaufman]

and the bargaining position of the Police Federation was a good deal stronger than may have been explained to the federation by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. Of course, the hon. Gentleman was correct to state that, the Police Federation having made a bargain with the Government, it should stick by it. That is an honourable position and I have no doubt that the federation will maintain that honourable position. I simply say that I do not believe that the federation was sensible to strike that bargain. If the federation had stuck with the Opposition, it would have done a great deal better. I have advised the Police Federation before, as the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is aware, that it should change its adviser and get a better deal.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk); It should have chosen the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Mr. Kaufman: My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) would have done a better job for the Police Federation than the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, who only got the federation a return to the status quo. If it had had a little chat with me instead of with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, the smiles on the faces of members of the federation would be broader than they are now.

However, the federation was badly advised. It has made a bargain and is sticking to it. I have repeatedly said—I said this to the largest meeting available to me at the Labour party's fringe meeting at the Police Federation meeting at Scarborough last May and I have repeated it to many other police audiences and to police as individuals, — that as far as the Opposition are concerned the Edmund-Davies agreement is intact. Whatever we propose must be in addition to Edmund-Davies and should not require a re-negotiation of Edmund-Davies formula. That point must be clearly understood. I want no one to believe that somehow or other we want to reopen the Edmund-Davies package to produce the better scheme to which I believe the police are entitled. I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will take that message away with the greatest of clarity.

We all know the Minister. He is coming to the end of a very long stint and he has done his best, but he has failed with the Treasury. He can only give us any kind of leverage when it comes to the new clause that does not cost any money. He told us that it will cost him £400,000 to allow the clause on clothing, but he could not do that because he had done justice to the memory of his ancestor and done right by engine drivers. I do not believe that it should be a matter of choice. We should have both. Now that the Minister has told us that his assessment of the cost of the clothing new clause is £400,000, we can set that within the context of the Budget announced two weeks ago. I have already made our position clear on the police and on the very small additional cost that would be implied in the lowering of the floor to £150.

In this life we take what we can get. What I can get is new clause 11. As I have got new clause 11, I am taking it. I expect the Minister to deliver. Having clinched that deal with the Minister, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 14

BAIL ACT 1976 NOT TO APPLY TO MURDER OR RAPE (No. 1)

'(1) Subsection (2) of section 4 of the Bail Act 1976 shall be amended by inserting after the word "offence", in the first place where it occurs, the words "other than murder or rape".'.—*[Mr. Peter Bruinvels.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Bruinvels: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 15—*Bail Act 1976 not to apply to murder or rape (No. 2)*—

'Where a person is brought before a magistrates' court or the Crown Court charged with the offence of murder or rape and he applies to the court for bail in connection with the proceedings, and where objection is made by the police to such an application, that person shall not be granted bail.'.

New clause 17—*Bail in cases of homicide and certain other serious offences*—

'After paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 to the Bail Act 1976 there shall be added the following:

"3A. In every case where the defendant is charge with murder, attempted murder or an offence contrary to section 18 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, any bail application shall be heard before a judge sitting in the Crown Court in open court, and before granting bail the judge shall certify in relation to the defendant that:—

(a) he has a settled address;

(b) he has surrendered his passport (if any);

(c) he has not been convicted of any of the offences described above;

(d) there are not substantial grounds for believing that he would fail to surrender to custody;

(e) there are not substantial grounds for believing that he would interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice, whether in relation to himself of any other person;

(f) there are not reasonable grounds for believing that he would commit an offence while on bail.".'.

New clause 22—*Restriction of bail on indictment*—

'(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 4 and Schedule 1 of the Bail Act 1976, no person indicted on a charge of murder shall be released on bail.

(2) No person with a previous conviction for an indictable offence shall be released on bail without the consent of the Crown, when charged with a further indictable offence.'.

Mr. Bruinvels: Following the Winston Silcott case, when Silcott was sentenced to a minimum of 30 years' imprisonment for murdering PC Blakelock and the headline in the *Daily Telegraph* stated:

"Pc Blakelock's killer was facing fourth death trial",

the House must be asking itself: has the Bail Act 1976 failed? The importance of any court decision in granting bail cannot be exaggerated. It is the duty of any court considering a bail application to balance the liberty of an unconvicted individual, who while awaiting trial is, of course, presumed innocent, against the requirements that those charged with criminal offences are duly brought to trial and the public protected.

The factors influencing the exercise of this discretion are encompassed in the Bail Act 1976. That Act placed a duty on the court to grant bail to an accused appearing before it. The presumption of bail can be overridden where the court is satisfied that the accused will abscond, will commit further offences on bail, will interfere with the course of justice or, more importantly, where there are fears for the defendant's safety. The establishment of any

one of those four factors to the satisfaction of the court will usually be enough to result in the accused person being remanded in custody, as should have happened in the Winston Silcott case.

The report on bail procedures in magistrates courts which was published in 1974 makes it clear:

"When an unconvicted person is remanded or committed for trial, there should be a presumption in favour of his being granted bail."

A Bail Act press release, issued by the Home Office on 17 April 1978, made it clear that the

"primary purpose of the Act is to improve the quality of bail decisions. It is hoped that this will help to eliminate unnecessary remands in custody and thereby reduce prison costs and relieve some of the pressure on prisons resulting from the increased rates in serious crime."

Hon. Members will not be unnecessarily concerned about whether prisons are crowded or overcrowded; they will be more concerned about whether the right kind of person is granted bail when necessary, and whether or not the police object. Although there may be a saving in court time, with fewer remand hearings being necessary, the court must retain full powers to order that those who seem likely to abuse bail or to be a danger to the public are kept in custody until their trial.

The Bail Act has created, I believe wrongly, a statutory presumption in favour of the grant of bail, by providing that, where a person is before a court and is charged with or convicted of an imprisonable offence and a remand is necessary, the court must remand him on bail unless satisfied that there are substantial grounds for believing that the defendant, if released on bail, would abscond, commit offences while on bail or otherwise interfere with the course of justice.

The primary purpose of the Bail Act appears, therefore, to be to improve the quality of bail decisions by setting out more clearly the questions to which the courts should address their minds when taking these decisions and, by improving the procedure, to ensure that these matters are considered at the right time. But it has become a bail lottery. I believe that a person charged with the offence of rape or murder should not be entitled in any circumstances to bail. Strangely, because of the bail lottery system, there is not consistency in practice. Anomalies strike at the heart of the criminal justice system. It is well known that the courts' proportionate use of custody for convicted offenders varies greatly from one court area to another.

I have itemised the presumption of bail, why it is allowed, the likelihood of the accused absconding, the likelihood of him committing further offences while on bail and the likelihood that he will intimidate witnesses or interfere with the course of justice, which were involved in the Winston Silcott case. There might also be fears for the accused's safety.

The proportion of those charged with indictable offences who are granted bail has risen slightly since the implementation of the Act, although there are no conclusive records. In 1979, 83 per cent. were granted bail and in 1984 86 per cent. In Leicestershire, 78 per cent. of those charged with indictable offences were put on bail.

On 20 June 1980 Sir David McNee, the Commissioner of Police, made it clear that he was fearful about the misuse of bail by criminals. The nature and gravity of charges must be considered in the decision whether to grant bail. On 9 May 1983 Lord Hailsham, speaking to a group of magistrates, said that the greatest caution should be exercised before granting bail to defendants facing grave charges, such as murder, rape or wounding with intent, and that if the provisions of the Bail Act were applied properly,

"only in exceptional circumstances would one expect bail to be granted to a person charged with murder, rape, wounding or other grave crime."

My new clause makes that point clearly.

12 midnight

On 8 May 1983, *The Observer* reported that Lord Hailsham, giving advice on bail, discussed the controversy over the case of a double rapist who while on bail murdered a housewife on Humberside. On 21 March 1987 the *Leicester Mercury* reported that he warned:

"I always was afraid that people would have to be bailed, if the Bail Act was passed, in circumstances where there was a serious danger that offences might be committed while the charged person was on bail. This, of course, is what has happened in this case."

He referred to the case of Winston Silcott, who was freed to kill again. He made it clear that the Bail Act must be changed. An article in *The Independent* states that although there was a lack of information offered in the Silcott case

"the Lord Chancellor insisted: 'I did warn the House of Lords when it went through that they had put it so strongly in favour of giving bail that they would find people committing offences when they were out on bail.'"

The two grounds given in the Silcott case were that he might abscond and that he might interfere with witnesses. It is significant that it was not mentioned that he might commit another murder.

On 21 February 1987 *The Independent* reported:

"There have been two recent examples where alleged rape victims have been killed by those accused of the rapes while out on bail. They were given their freedom by magistrates."

In *The Sun*, Mr. John Kay itemised four cases of repeat murders and four cases of repeat rape while the accused were on bail. They were John Wrigglesworth on a murder charge, Ian Sherlock on a murder charge, David Swan on a rape charge, Michael Halt on a murder charge, Archibald Cummings on a rape charge, Anthony Elliot on a murder charge, Christopher Meah on a rape charge and Jim Smith on a rape charge.

Judges and magistrates are expected to use their discretion when considering bail applications for serious charges, such as rape and murder. New clause 14 provides that no bail should ever by granted to those charged with murder, rape, or attempted rape or murder. In other cases, judges and magistrates may grant bail. Similarly, under new clause 15 it would be possible for those charged with murder, for example in a domestic case, to be allowed out on bail, if the police did not object. Provided the police did not object, those charged with murder or rape would be allowed out on bail.

There has been great abuse in particular rape cases. On 24 March 1987, *The Guardian* reported that a person on bail on a murder charge was found hanged. The police had been fearful for his safety and that he might do damage to himself, but he was still allowed out on bail. Anybody who is suspected of murder should not be given bail in any circumstances.

The Home Secretary said that defendants are suspected of committing murder but have not been convicted and may be acquitted subsequently. That is right, but it is not necessarily satisfactory. Trials should be speeded up. Courts should not be inhibited in granting bail, whether or not there are 50,000 people in prison. Judge Robert Lymbery QC, as Lord Hailsham said, was probably right

[Mr. Bruinvels]

in his decision in the Silcott case. It grieves me to say that, because PC Blakelock lost his life through Silcott being let out. There is a connection. However, Lord Hailsham said that freedom of action was curtailed by the Bail Act, but Judge Lymbery said that he was given as "many" facts as he was able to ascertain.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us why he would allow bail to people who are charged with attempted murder? The intention required for the commission of an offence of attempted murder is specifically that of guilt, whereas for murder it can be merely the intent to cause serious injury.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am not in favour of bail being granted in either case. I have every confidence in the police presenting their case once they have brought the case to court. People who have a history of evil intent, and who are charged with murder or rape, should not be granted bail until they have appeared in court and have been successfully prosecuted or legally acquired. No one who is accused of murder should be allowed bail. I have raised this matter with various Law Officers and Home Office Ministers.

It is an error of judgment to allow out on bail people who are accused of murder. Far too many people are allowed out on bail when the offences against them are serious. I have asked my hon. Friend to consider amending the law so that persons who are accused of murder and rape may not be granted bail under any circumstances. I am hopeful that that will be looked into again. The Minister of State said in a written reply to me that he is looking at the events that led to the granting of bail to Winston Silcott.

Retrospective studies are necessary. We have none at the moment, and we need them. Information must be collected centrally. We should look carefully at these two amendments. The public are outraged that potential murderers are allowed out on bail. The judge probably does not know best, but the local police do. If the police object to bail being granted in any case, I would give more credibility to the men on the beat than to a judge, who may be in the Old Bailey, very remote from the case. These two new clauses give the House an opportunity to test the water. I urge that they be considered today.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I shall speak briefly to new clause 17, which appears in my name and those of my hon. Friends.

The Silcott case has given rise to perfectly legitimate public concern about what happened in that case and what might happen in similar instances where people are charged with murder or very serious offences of violence and commit offences while they are on bail. It is possible to give a just and measured response to the public concern that has been expressed.

The first thing is that we should make the scrutiny of bail applications much clearer and more effective. In the past 16 years bail applications in most, if not all, Crown courts have been heard in chambers. There have been many complaints about this, and *The Independent* has recently been running a campaign to draw special attention to the unjustifiable secrecy in many forms of hearing, including bail applications.

I can think of no good reason why bail hearings should not take place in open court, so that they can be scrutinised properly, and so that comment can be made upon them. It may be that there are good reasons why the comment cannot be made at the time of, or immediately following, the application, for that might prejudice a fair trial. At the moment there is a great deal of dissatisfaction because one is not able to find out what happened at the hearing in chambers. The Silcott case is an example of that. It is regrettable that the judge had to deal with it in the way that he did. The only way in which he could bring to public attention what had happened was by making the sort of statement that he made. That would not be necessary if bail applications were made in open court.

Mr. Cash: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that on 18 July 1976, when this matter was being considered, the proposal of the Lord Chancellor that the words "unacceptable risk" should be retained in the Bill was defeated by an amendment that was moved by the Government, supported by the hon. Members for Cambridgeshire, North-east (Mr. Freud) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth), who are members of the hon. Gentleman's alliance? They bear a heavy responsibility for the change in the law that was achieved in Committee, as a result of which the Silcott affair took place.

Mr. Carlile: I was talking about an entirely different point. I gave way to the hon. Gentleman because I thought that his intervention would be relevant. We all learn by our mistakes. I was not a Member of the House in 1976, nor was the hon. Gentleman. We do not know how either of us would have responded to that provision. It is no use the hon. Gentleman wagging his finger in that offensive manner, because he knows what I have just said to be the case.

In an attempt to be helpful, I am suggesting that not only could the scrutiny of these bail applications be made much more effective if they were heard in open court—I hope that that is a proposal to which we shall have a considered response from the Minister—but we could slightly dilute the grounds or the considerations to which the court must have regard under the Bail Act in those cases where the charge is one of murder, attempted murder or a serious offence of personal violence, contrary to section 18 of the Offences Against the Person Act.

Under the Bail Act, the judge is required to grant bail, but only if a number of conditions are satisfied, including the fact that there are not substantial grounds for believing that the accused would commit an offence while on bail. If that word "substantial" were altered to "reasonable", so that not quite as high a test had to be applied by the judge when he was considering whether to grant bail, in a case within the restricted categories that I have mentioned, that would give a sensible extra measure of protection to the public. The extended grounds set out in new clause 17 would meet the concern that is expressed, without going to the unfair and absurd extremes suggested in new clauses 14 and 15.

Mr. Lawrence: It is shocking when someone who is on a serious charge is given bail and then kills. The question is whether we need to do anything about the existing law. Although I see from the report of the Bail Act debated in 1976 that I did not welcome it and thought that it was unnecessary, and I said:

"I do not welcome any legislation which will not remedy positive evil or do positive good. We spend too much of our

time churning out legislation which will not achieve anything very much."—[*Official Report*, 26 May 1976; Vol. 912, c. 546.]

the fact is that maintaining the status quo is the best way to deal with the problem. Therefore, I support new clauses 14, 15 and 22. New clause 17 detracts from the present law.

12.15 am

The existing law gives ample scope to deal with bail in very serious cases, notwithstanding some of the reports in the newspapers at the time of the Silcott case. Not only does schedule 1(1) to the Bail Act set out eight circumstances, with which I need not detain the House, when bail can be refused, but it goes on to say:

"In taking the decisions required by paragraph 2"—

the exceptions—

"the court shall have regard to such of the following considerations as appear to it to be relevant, that is to say—

(a) the nature and seriousness of the offence of default . . .

(b) the character, antecedents, associations and community ties of the defendant . . .

(c) the defendant's record as respects the fulfilment of his obligations under previous grants of bail . . .

(d) except in the case of a defendant whose case is adjourned for inquiries . . . the strength of the evidence of his having committed the offence or having defaulted "

and it adds:

"as well as to any others which appear to be relevant."

It seems that the judge in any case of seriousness has complete power to say, "No, this is not a case for bail."

The trouble with depriving someone of bail for murder or any other offence is that the offence of murder may be reduced to manslaughter, or it may be a mercy killing, or it may be the sort of offence where the person does not get sent to prison for long or at all. Think, then, of the iniquity of keeping someone in custody for 12 months because, by law, he must be refused bail when, at the end of the day, he is acquitted or is placed on probation or is given a sentence substantially less than 12 months. For those reasons, astonishingly, I support the Government tonight.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: This debate almost certainly would not be taking place if Keith Blakelock had not been murdered on Broadwater Farm. I went to the farm the following evening and spent a lot of time with the police there. It is the view of many Metropolitan police officers that he did not need to die. It therefore came as a shock to many of them to learn that his killer was a man out on bail.

The Home Secretary was wise to avoid joining in the national furore that arose immediately in the press, and I congratulate him on having paused, reflected and then given a lead in his statement on television.

I hope that we shall hear from the Government tonight, not that they support the proposed new clauses — because in my view they are not appropriate in the circumstances — but that the reflections of the Home Secretary on this issue will bring forward new proposals so that hopefully — nobody can be sure — the kind of problem that we saw with the death of Keith Blakelock will not recur in this country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) on having given us the opportunity to discuss the working of the Bail Act.

I shall make a few general points before dealing with the questions that have been posed. Leaving aside the tragic case with which we are concerned, the problem with the Bail Act has been the large and increasing number of persons held in custody pending trial.

The figures are really alarming. Between 1945 and 1965 the remand population was about 6 per cent. of the prison population. By 1976 the remand population had risen to 9 per cent. of the prison population, and by 1985 it had risen to 18 per cent. of the prison population. The latest figures are that at the end of January 1987 the prison population was 47,200 and the number of untried prisoners within the prison system was 9,000, or 19 per cent. So the problem in very general terms about the Bail Act 1976 has been the very large number of unconvicted persons who are held in custody.

I should stress that the great majority of those who have been charged with murder or attempted murder are remanded in custody. The figures show that 87 per cent. of those charged with murder and 83 per cent. of those charged with attempted murder are remanded in custody. I feel that generally speaking that is right. However, the fact that Silcott was on bail and that that fact contributed to the death of PC Blakelock is a matter of great concern and worry to us all. Plainly, we have to consider whether it is right to make statutory changes. Equally plainly, it should be possible to make changes to the Act that would reduce the risk of such a tragedy happening again.

I suggest that the Government need first to examine very carefully the working of the Act and also the events surrounding the particular case in order to try as best we can to determine whether what happened points to some defect in the statute, some defect in procedure, or some other error. We propose to go forward urgently intent on scrutinising what happened in an anxious and careful manner. I hope that in the not too distant future — indeed, quite soon — the Government will be able to come forward with their conclusions. If we think that statutory changes are necessary, we will make proposals to the House for consideration.

The new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East would, of course, prevent the granting of bail for those charged with murder or rape. The effect of his new clause would be to put a total and absolute bar upon the granting of bail in those circumstances. That is not a proposal that I would commend to the House. I entirely share the views put forward by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and I will remind the House very quickly of them.

There is a presumption of innocence. People are to be presumed innocent until they are found guilty. That presumption of innocence argues strongly in favour of not withholding bail. That is true of murder cases as a proposition, although in the great majority of cases it would be right for bail to be withheld.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree with his noble father with regard to the expression that he attempted to insert into the Bill in 1976, that the words "unacceptable risk" were a better choice than the word "probably"? Furthermore, it was, of course, the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), who was then Home Secretary, who was responsible for ensuring that the lesser test was applied when the Bill was ultimately enacted,

[Mr. Cash]

against the advice of a great number of libertarian Law Lords in the House of Lords, who agreed with my hon. Friend's noble father.

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor may well have been right. I feel sure that what he said was very wise and was uttered after measured thought. I do not want to pluck out of the air today any particular formula. I merely want to say to the House that the Government are concerned about what has happened. We intend to subject the Act and the surrounding events to careful scrutiny and we will come forward with our conclusions.

I was seeking to outline the reasons why, in my view at least, it would not be right to impose a total and automatic ban upon the granting of bail to those charged with murder. I was adopting the points put forward by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton. First, there is the presumption of innocence. Secondly, the fact is that a significant number of persons charged with murder are acquitted. In 1984 a total of 22 per cent. of those charged with murder were acquitted of all offences of homicide. A total of 47 per cent. of those charged with murder were found not guilty of murder but guilty of a lesser offence such as manslaughter. There is another consideration. There will always be a small number of offenders charged with murder where the ultimate charge is one of manslaughter, reflecting an offence such as euthanasia. In those cases the courts may well feel that it is wrong in principle to impose a custodial sentence.

I cannot commend to the court—*[Interruption.]* It was a Freudian slip. I have always laughed at other barristers to whom it has happened and it serves me right that it has happened to me. Having regard to those serious facts, it would surely be wrong to impose a total and automatic ban.

The same applies, although for slightly different reasons, to the offence of rape. Again, we have to face the fact that about 26 per cent. of those charged with rape are ultimately acquitted. Therefore, I do not commend to the House the arguments put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East.

I shall now deal with the arguments put forward by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). I accept at once that what he has outlined is a defensible position, save that he is removing from the magistrates court, in respect of the three designated classes, an ability to grant bail. I would differ with him on that point. However, as I have said, that is a defensible position. I cannot say that at this moment the House should come to a conclusion because I would not wish to put to the House a conclusive view as of now. The Government's process of scrutiny, inqury and consideration is not complete.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): In view of the fact that my hon. Friend has used the words "urgency" and "consideration" several times, can he tell the House when he intends to do something? Do the Government intend to bring forward an amendment in another place?

Mr. Hogg: I cannot answer the question posed by my hon. Friend in the absolute way in which he is asking. He is right to ask the question, but I cannot answer it in the way in which he would like. We are considering whether there is a defect in the Act and whether there are defects in procedures. We are trying to see whether it is possible, by statutory changes, to prevent such tragedies happening again. When we have come to a view on that, we will tell the House or make it known in some other appropriate way. I cannot promise that it will happen at once, although I hope that our view will become known while the Bill is going through Parliament.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): If my hon. Friend is seriously saying, as I understand him to be saying, that he is going to look at the new clause moved by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), what concerns me is the suggestion in that clause that applications for bail should be heard in open court. Presumably that implies that it is open to publicity. If that is the intention, I find it difficult to see how it can be done. I have a lot of sympathy with what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said, but it must be clear that we cannot risk bail applications prejudging the defendant or influencing the jury in the subsequent trial.

12.30 am

Mr. Budgen *rose*—

Mr. Hogg: I will give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

I entirely agree with the point that my right hon. and learned Friend has raised. I am sorry if I gave the impression that it is likely that the Government will come forward with proposals very similar to those of the hon. and learned Member. That is not the impression that I wish to give. The point that my right hon. and learned Friend makes is right, and it illustrates the great importance of not rushing forward with proposed legislation. I agree with what he says.

Mr. Budgen: Perhaps I can make a point which will, of course, be absolutely obvious to my hon. Friend. The principal disadvantage of having any form of hearing in open court is that the judge who is deciding whether bail shall be granted or not has to know the previous convictions, if any, of the defendant. That is one of the most important considerations in deciding whether he is likely to commit another offence. It is very difficult to see how it could be possible for a judge to give a considered judgment in open court, while disguising the fact that the accused has previous convictions. I am bound to say that on the occasions when I have applied for or opposed bail it has been done in an informal way, and perhaps at the margin mistakes have been made; but a much greater evil would be done it there were a risk that the accused's previous convictions would become known to the public at large.

Mr. Hogg: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Again, he is emphasising how unwise it would be for the Government to rush forward with statutory proposals. What he has said is right and what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) has said is right.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful for what the Minister has said. It is obviously said in the spirit of intending to do something about the situation. However, I am concerned about his response to whether bail applications should be heard in open court. Does he not recognise that it is very much a hit-or-miss business now? If a case is put up for plea only or for pre-trial review, the bail applications are all heard in open court in any event; it is

only when there are applications which are purely and simply for bail that they are heard in chambers. It is not sensible to say that they should all be heard in open court so they can be scrutinised, bearing in mind what the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) said, with which I agree entirely, that publicity must be restricted until the trial of the defendant is over.

Mr. Hogg: I do not disagree with what the hon. and learned Gentleman has just said. All I am seeking to do at present is to tell the House that we are seized of the gravity of this matter. We want to see whether there is a defect in the Act or in the procedure and, if so, whether it would be right to come forward with statutory proposals. At the moment, we have not come to a conclusion. The kind of arguments advanced by hon. Members on both sides illustrate the wisdom of looking at this problem carefully and dispassionately and trying to get it right. That is what the Government will seek to do.

I cannot commend the new clause to the House, but I would say that we are treating this matter very seriously and hope in the near future to come forward with our own conclusions.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I welcome the commitment given by my hon. Friend to examine fully the Winston Silcott case and the defects in procedure. I am still concerned about the time limit. I hope that a review of the bail legislation will be undertaken as quickly as possible and that it will be considered more fully in another place. I look forward to the conclusions of my hon. Friend.

Although the Lord Chancellor has been firm and clear and has urged caution in the granting of bail in rape and murder cases, all trials must be speeded up because there are too many murders and rapes. I ask my hon. Friend to update the statistics so that we may know how many people have been convicted of crimes of rape and murder whilst on bail.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Hon. Members: No.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 19

POWER TO SUSPEND YOUTH CUSTODY SENTENCE

"The provision relating to the powers of the courts to suspend either in whole or in part a sentence of imprisonment as set out in the Powers of the Criminal Courts Act 1973 (as amended) and in section 47 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 shall apply with like effect to any youth custody sentence.".
—*[Mr. Mark Carlisle.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The hour is late and I shall try to be brief. The background to the new clause is that, having come nineteenth in the private Members' ballot this year, I put down a private Member's Bill which would have the same effect as the clause that I now propose. Its purpose is to give power to the courts to suspend a sentence of youth custody in exactly the same way as they have power to suspend a sentence of imprisonment passed on a person over 21.

I do not pretend that the language that I have used in the new clause is perfect, and I am not asking my hon. Friend to say tonight that the Government accept the new clause, but I hope that I shall have from my hon. Friend an assurance that the Government will consider its purpose.

It has been of considerable concern to members of the judiciary—I refer, if one has to declare an interest at this stage, not only to those who sit in a permanent capacity, but to those who sit as recorders in a part-time capacity—that while they can suspend a sentence of imprisonment imposed on someone over 21, they cannot suspend a sentence of youth custody imposed on someone under 21. A court may often be faced with, say, four defendants, two of whom are over 21 and two of whom are under 21, and for various reasons it may be necessary to impose a custodial sentence on of all of them. The court has power to consider for those over 21 whether it is right that the sentences be suspended wholly or in part, whereas for those under 21 it cannot by law consider suspension of the sentences. This is an illogicality in our penal system that deserves examination. I believe that I am expressing the concern of a great many involved in the criminal courts in raising this point.

Mr. Ashby: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that I have spoken to many judges, all of whom say that they would dearly love to see Parliament doing away with this anomaly and that they would like suspended sentences to be available for those under 21?

Mr. Carlisle: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is my experience, after talking to those who sit in a judicial capacity, that they recognise the illogicality in this area.

I hope that I understand why the Government felt it necessary to oppose the new clause and my private Member's Bill and why I suspect they will advise the House not to accept the new clause this evening. The Government say that, because of the philisophy of those matters which the court must take into account when deciding whether it is appropriate to impose any penalty of a custodial nature on a person under 21, it is inappropriate if that penalty is then suspended.

Let me remind my hon. Friend that I do not think that that argument stands up to much investigation. Of course, it is true that under the Criminal Justice Act 1982, and under new clause 2 which the Government have accepted today

"Where a person under 21 years of age is convicted or found guilty of an offence, the court may not . . . pass a youth custody sentence"—

that is the youth custody order with which my new clause is concerned—

"unless it is satisfied . . . that no other method of dealing with him appropriate".

It goes on to set out that that means that

"he is unable or unwilling to respond to non-custodial penalties"

or because a custodial sentence is necessary for the protection of the public or because the offence

"was so serious that a non-custodial sentence cannot be justified."

I remind my hon. Friend that the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 says, although not set out in the same detail, that no court shall pass a sentence of imprisonment on a person over 21 who has not previously been to prison or had a sentence of imprisonment passed upon him unless the court is of the opinion that no other method of dealing with him is appropriate.

Whether the person is over 21 or under 21, the court first has to decide whether it is satisfied that there is no

[Mr. Carlisle]

other appropriate method for dealing with him. Those considerations are much the same whether the person is 21 or 20. In fact — my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm this—there is clear authority from the Court of Appeal that no court should consider suspending either wholly or in part a sentence of imprisonment unless, in the absence of the power to suspend, it believes that it would be right to impose a custodial sentence. In other words, before a sentence of imprisonment is suspended, partially or wholly, it must first be decided that the sentence of imprisonment is the right sentence. Therefore, the argument that there is some philosophical difference between those under 21 and those over 21——

Mr. Soley: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware of new clause 2, which was accepted by the House. He will have several difficulties if he pursues his new clause. He has spotted one of them, but what does he say of the position of a young person given a suspended sentence who then commits another relatively minor offence? He will be in breach of the suspended sentence but will then be trapped by the new clause, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman, along with his right hon. and hon. Friends, supported.

Mr. Carlisle: I did not speak on the new clause and I was not in the Chamber when it was debated, but as far as I can see it adds little to the existing law under section 1(4) of the Criminal Justice Act. I accept that if one goes for the concept of the right to suspend wholly or in part the sentence of youth custody, which I believe to be right or desirable, the wording of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, or the wording of new clause 2, to which the Government were sympathetic today, may have to be changed slightly.

Let me return to the reality of the situation. Let us suppose that a court is trying a group of people who have been convicted of, or have pleaded guilty to, an offence. Some are over 21, and some under 21. Whoever is trying the case must first ask himself what is the appropriate penalty for the offence, and whether as the law requires, he is of the opinion that a custodial sentence is the only appropriate method of dealing with it.

12.45 am

Let us assume that those people are out of work. In that case, it is ridiculous to suggest that a substantial fine is a realistic alternative. They are not recommended for community service and, for various reasons, they do not appear to be appropriate cases for a probation order. However, they have committed serious offences—let us say breaking and entering—and the court is therefore required to consider a custodial sentence as being the only appropriate method available.

Having reached that conclusion, the court decides that, in view of the background and history of the individuals concerned, it would be right to suspend the sentences. Surely it is wrong that the court should be able to suspend the sentence of the person over 21, but not the youth custody sentence imposed on the person under 21. It was to try to deal with that anomaly, which I know concerns those who sit in our courts, that I tabled the new clause.

My hon. Friend may say that there is a danger that the new clause will lead to a proliferation of youth custody sentences being imposed on those under 21. I shall be quite happy if he says that he will examine the new clause in the context of the higher courts only. I do not accept the argument that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) put forward in his intervention. Surely the whole point of a suspended sentence is that if the offender breaches it he is likely to go to prison. The purpose of my new clause is to empower the court, if it decides that youth custody is the only appropriate sentence, to consider whether it should be suspended, as the law requires it to do if the sentence is one of imprisonment.

In answer to the hon. Gentleman's intervention, in the absence of the power to suspend a sentence, the court, having come to the conclusion that a youth custody order is appropriate, cannot consider suspending; it is bound to put the person into custody immediately. If that person is over 21, however, the court has the option of considering whether the threat involved in a suspended sentence is adequate.

I hope that my introduction of the new clause has not been too long.

The point is worthy of consideration. Indeed, it is contained in the Government's document "Custodial Sentences for Young Offenders". I hope that the Government will take into account the views expressed by the judiciary and others, and in another place consider the introduction of such a measure.

Mr. Lawrence: I shall be brief. I support my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle), and I hope that the Government will accept new clause 19, or at least take it away and worry about it and come back with something constructive.

My right hon. and learned Friend argued his case cogently, and I have very little to add. However, I can confirm that, in so far as judges can ever be described as a lobbying body, I was lobbied in the London courts on the last couple of occasions that I have sat as an assistant recorder. They said, "For goodness' sake, do what you can to get the law changed and given a more sensible form."

I refer my hon. Friend the Minister to what the Lord Chief Justice, who I know commands great respect, said in the Court of Appeal in the case, in 1983, of R. *v.* Dobs and Hitchin. Two young men aged 18 and 19 pleaded guilty to inflicting grievous bodily harm. Lord Lane said:

"The court notes that, unfortunately, it is not possible for terms of youth custody to be suspended either in whole or in part, so consequently the sentencing court is often in a dilemma . . . For instance, in this case it might very well have been that the Recorder would make up his mind that a term of 12 or possibly even 18 months was appropriate, but in the light of the character, the testimonials and so on, perhaps only six months of that need be served, but that he cannot do. So what is he to do? Either he passes a sentence of 18 months, none of which he is allowed to suspend, which would probably be too long, or he goes to the other extreme, which is the only alternative, and passes an immediate sentence of that length of time which he would have ordered actually to be served in a partially suspended sentence, which would probably be six months. Each of those two is going to be wrong for one reason or another, the former too long, the latter too short. That is the situation which faces a court. One hopes that Parliament will see fit to make it possible before long for the courts to do that which in many cases they would wish and probably wish to do but at the moment that is not possible . . . What has to be done in this case? The answer is quite plain. In the circumstances which I have described, the only proper course is to pass the lesser of the two sentences."

That is clear, and the view is repeated in other cases. If Lord Lane's view is not more cogent than my words and perhaps those of my right hon. and learned Friend, there is no meaning in the word cogent.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept the new clause.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) have put extremely clearly the argument in favour of new clause 19. My right hon. and learned Friend asked us to say whether it is worthy of consideration. It clearly is. My hon. and learned Friend asked me to take it away, worry about it and bring something back. The Government will take it away and worry about it, but I cannot give any undertaking to bring something back.

I recognise that my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. and learned Friend were expressing the views of the higher judiciary, most notably the Lord Chief Justice.

This is a nicely balanced argument, and it is partly because of that and partly because we recognise the force behind the observations that have just been made that the Government embarked on a consultation process last summer. The great majority of the responses were hostile to what my right hon. and learned Friend has proposed. I shall mention but four—the Magistrates Association, the Law Society, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and the National Association of Probation Officers. They were hostile because they feared that the power to suspend would result in more custodial sentences being imposed.

There is some evidence to support that view before and since 1982, but I shall not trouble the House with it. None the less, those who responded were concerned about the possibility of an increase in custodial sentences.

My right hon. and learned Friend has shot my fox in the sense that he has torn to pieces the argument that I intended to advance on verbal gymnastics and the effect of the 1982 legislation, which provides that a custodial sentence can be imposed only if it is believed that that is the only appropriate way of dealing with the offender. I shall not trouble the House with that argument, but there is one more consideration that I would urge upon it. Anomalies will arise in either direction, but there will certainly be an anomaly if we accept the new clause, because it extends only to youth custody orders and does not embrace detention centre orders. Let us suppose that the elder of two young persons was sentenced to a youth custody order, part of which was suspended, and, though he was the ringleader, he served a lesser period than the younger offender who was sentenced to a detention centre order which could not be suspended. I accept, however, that these are debating points.

I return to where I started. The argument has been well advanced, but the Government's present position is that it is a proposal that we would not wish to support, for the reasons that I have set out. Anxiety is felt by many that the proposal would result in an increase in the number of custodial sentences that the courts impose, but it would be silly of me not to say to my right hon. and learned Friend and hon. and learned Friend that their arguments have been adduced with such clarity and eloquence that it is at least right that we should worry about the problem further. I do not want to give my right hon. and learned Friend the understanding, however, that I am giving a commitment to return to the House with revised legislation. I am not doing that.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: I remember only too well that, when I occupied the position of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, I was put up on various occasions to argue against the amendment that was regularly moved to remove the then restriction on sending people under 21 years of age to prison for periods shorter than nine months or longer than three years. I tried always to argue against it with the eloquence with which my hon. Friend has argued his case this evening, but about eight years later in 1982 the sense behind the removal of the restriction was accepted by the House. I suspect that in a similar period the House will come to accept that sentences of youth custody should be suspended like sentences of imprisonment.

I am happy to have made the point and to have heard the Minister say that at least the Government are considering the merits of my argument. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 20

RIGHT OF CROWN TO APPEAL AGAINST SENTENCES

'(1) Where a person has been convicted of an offence on indictment the prosecution may appeal to the court of appeal in any case where the sentence is manifestly inadequate.

(2) An appeal lies under this section only with the leave of the court of appeal.

(3) The Court of Appeal in dealing with an appeal against sentence under this section may, if they consider that the sentence is manifestly inadequate and that the defendant should be sentenced differently:—

(a) quash any sentence or order which is the subject of the appeal; and

(b) in place of it pass such sentence or make such order as is appropriate for the case and which the Court below had power to pass or make when dealing with him for the offence.—*[Mr. Hind.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 60, in page 19, line 17, leave out Clause 29.

No. 61, in clause 29, page 19, leave out lines 19 to 21 and insert

'concern, he shall refer the case to the Court of Appeal to obtain a review of the sentence in question'.

Government amendment No. 62.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will we have the opportunity to divide, if we so wish, on amendments Nos. 60 and 61 as well as on the new clause?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That will be decided when that stage is reached.

Mr. Hind: It will be clear to anyone who reads the Amendment Paper carefully that amendment No. 60 is dependent upon the new clause in that it deletes clause 29, which the new clause is designed to replace. The new clause seeks to impose standards of sentencing upon the courts. It is geared to the guidelines that have been provided consistently by the Court of Appeal and by directions from the Lord Chief Justice, which have been passed on to judges at sentencing conferences.

At present, anybody who receives an excessive sentence can appeal to the Court of Appeal to have his sentence

[Mr. Hind]

reduced so that it conforms with the guidelines. The same opportunity is not afforded to victims of crime when the accused is given a manifestly lenient sentence. Neither the prosecution nor the victim can draw the attention of the Court of Appeal to that lenient sentence and ask for it to be increased. That was made abundantly clear in the Ealing vicarage rape case. The attention of the public was drawn to the leniency of the sentence that was passed on one of the accused. The guidelines were clearly not adhered to in that case, but there was no remedy.

I am

The clause extends to the victims of crime the same privilege as is extended to defendants. If a judge continues to give lenient sentences, those sentences cannot be reviewed. New clause 20 deals with that problem. It stresses that the sentence must be manifestly inadequate and that it does not meet the guidelines, before there can be an appeal to the Court of Appeal.

For the first time, a more important role is provided for prosecution counsel. Having called upon a police officer to read out the antecedents, counsel will no longer be able to close his brief and say, "My part in this case is over." He will be obliged to advise the Crown prosecutor of the adequacy or otherwise of the sentence that has been passed. Some people fear that for the first time the prosecution will be involved in the passing of the sentence. It will not be involved in that process; nor will it have to say what sentence it thinks should be passed. It will make sure that the guidelines are complied with and if, in all the circumstances, the sentence is manifestly too lenient, it will have to say so.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my hon. Friend able to advise me, as a non-lawyer, whether subsection (3)*(b)* of his excellent new clause would include the power to ask that a criminal bankruptcy order be made if the trial judge omitted to make such an order?

Mr. Hind: Yes.

The social inquiry report is a problem. If the prosecutor is not satisfied with the sentence that is passed, he can ask at the end of the case to see the social inquiry report. I stress that he can do that at the end of the case. It is the property of the court. Only convention has prevented the prosecution from having sight of the social inquiry report that is prepared for the benefit of the court.

Once the prosecutor decides that the sentence is manifestly inadequate, he will advise the Crown prosecuting solicitor, who will then submit grounds of appeal to a single judge of the Court of Appeal. If the single judge thinks that it is an appropriate case to go before the Court of Appeal, there will be a full hearing. Under new clause 20 the Court of Appeal would have the power to increase the sentence on the accused if, in all the circumstances, it was seen to be manifestly inadequate.

In a courtroom there are a number of factors that we must consider. The state is there not only to represent the interests of justice and to prosecute the case, but to make sure that justice is seen to be done. In those circumstances, it is important to allay much of the dissatisfaction of the general public by ensuring that sentences are seen to be fair and balanced and that both sides of the courtroom—the defence and prosecution, the state's representatives and the victim's representatives—have the same treatment and equality. In that way we will develop consistency in sentencing and we will ensure that justice is seen to be done on a consistent basis.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend's name is the only one attached to the new clause, but I am sure that other hon. Members would want to congratulate him on bringing forward this very important matter.

Mr. Hind: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend.

One of the reasons why I introduced the new clause is that I believe that weaknesses exist in clause 29 as it stands. I commend my right hon. and hon. Friends, the Ministers in the Home Office, for accepting that there is a need to review lenient sentences. My advice to them in the circumstances is that clause 29 does not go far enough. It could be strengthened by the adoption of new clause 20.

I have certain reservations about clause 29. It involves the Attorney-General in a political role that he has not had before. This will mean that should a sentence be highlighted in the tabloid press, hon. Members will receive hundreds of letters asking them to urge the Attorney-General to refer the case to the Court of Appeal. That is an entirely new role for the Attorney-General, and that is a road down which we do not want to travel. It will ultimately lead to questions in the House about specific cases at Question Time when the Attorney-General answers questions. I respectfully suggest that that is the wrong way for us to proceed.

My next point is more fundamental. If an accused person receives a manifestly inadequate sentence, that will leave the victims and, in the case of murder, the deceased's relatives, with a feeling of deep dissatisfaction. They would then press for the case to be taken to the Court of Appeal, and they will hear the Lord Chief Justice of England say that he is very sorry that the sentence passed on the accused was totally inadequate, but there is nothing that he can do about it. That will bring the law into disrepute. It will rattle some of the faith that the public have in the law. I can see that it will result in TV crews on the steps of the courts in the Strand with the victims in tears saying, "How can they do this to me? This is a massive injustice." Clearly, the result will be that the tabloid press will take the matter up and it will become the talk of the day.

Pressure will be placed on the House to achieve the result that new clause 20 sets out to achieve. If that is the position that my right hon. Friend and hon. Friends are seeking they can achieve it in the way that I have just described, or they can achieve it by adopting new clause 20.

I have proposed new clause 20. If the Government do not accept it, I am prepared to put up with clause 29 in the short term. I am sure that many of my colleagues know that in a short time we shall be back here to put on to the statute book a clause similar to new clause 20.

Mr. Alex Carlile: There are three possible positions on this issue. One, which is perfectly logical, has been put forward by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). I do not agree with it, but at least it has the appeal of logic. The other logical position is the one that I would adopt, which is set out in amendment No. 60 and involves the removal of clause 29. The prosecution should not and need not become involved in appeals against sentence to the Court of Appeal. The problems, such as they are, can be dealt with by handing down further guidelines from the Court of Appeal and possibly by strengthening the

Judicial Studies Board, as proposed by the Government in their White Paper. I do not understand why they have changed their mind.

The third position totally lacks any kind of logic. It is the one for which the Government have gone. It is a hostage to fortune, because it requires the Attorney-General to make some political decisions on issues which would be unwelcome to any Attorney-General. It asks that there should be a reference to the Court of Appeal in certain cases. One can envisage the Court of Appeal saying, "The sentence should be doubled, but we cannot do anything about it because that is the law that Parliament has provided." It is absolute nonsense. I hope that we are given the opportunity to vote on amendment No. 60, because that is how the law should be. We should not have been troubled with this provision.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: My name is shared by four hon. Members; one spells it differently, but I totally agree with every word uttered by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile).

I shall speak only on amendment No. 60, but we cannot let the Bill proceed without those of us who feel strongly about this matter saying that clause 29 is nonsense, for the reasons given by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. The purpose of clause 29 is to deal with the occasional case of considerable notoriety in which it appears that a court has given a sentence which the public thinks is inadequate. It passes my understanding how one can believe that the public's concern will be assuaged by that case being referred to the Court of Appeal for it to rap the judge over the knuckles and say, "Your sentence was wrong, but we shall not do anything about it."

I go a little further than the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. One must be realistic and take the cases involved. The hon. and learned Gentleman talked about the case of a person sentenced to imprisonment. Let us say that the Attorney-General takes the view that the sentence is totally inadequate and he refers the case to the Court of Appeal. That court says, "Quite right. It should not have been three years. It should have been eight." But the man serves only three years. How much more so does this affect the person who is given a non-custodial sentence and whose case is referred to the Court of Appeal? The Court of Appeal says, "Quite right. That man should not have been given a non-custodial sentence. He should have been imprisoned for five years. But we shall not imprison him. He can still walk freely around the streets in front of you all." I cannot believe that a reference of that nature can possibly assuage public anxiety about the sentence or see how in any way the Court of Appeal saying that the sentence is inadequate can meet that anxiety.

The provision is wholly unnecessary. If a sentence causes a great deal of concern, in reality the Court of Appeal takes an appropriate opportunity in another case to express guidelines for future sentences. That does not require the charade of referring individual cases to it which it cannot change.

An individual case will not be filed under the name of the individual concerned which, again, is ludicrous. Is it seriously suggested that a case which attracted a great deal of publicity should be given a reference such that the public will not link it to the case that made the front page of the tabloids the previous month? The public will be aware of the case and their anxiety will not be assuaged when the court says that the sentence is inadequate but will do nothing about it.

1.15 am

As my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery have said, the Attorney-General is placed in an impossible role. He is responsible and answerable to the House. If he has a power by statute, he can be questioned about it. Under clause 29, if anybody anywhere considers any sentence to be in any way inadequate, he can write to his Member of Parliament who will be entitled to write, and justified in writing to the Attorney-General to ask why he has not referred that case to the Court of Appeal. The Attorney-General will have to face a barrage of letters and will be answerable from the Dispatch Box for his decisions whether to refer a case to the Court of Appeal. We are in grave danger of drawing the Executive into sentencing.

I have spoken for longer than I should have done. I do not know whether it is right to divide the House at this hour, but, to the disappointment of the Government, a similar proposal was thrown out in another place when it appeared in another guise in another Bill and I hope that their Lordships will take a similar view on this occasion.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for revising his provisional selection of amendments and new clauses to include this group.

I shall explain briefly why I much prefer the phrasing of new clause 20 to amendment No. 61. Under amendment No. 61, the power of the Court of Appeal is limited to sentencing. The greatest of the injustices that can fall on an individual victim as opposed to society at large is if the trial court fails to make a compensation or criminal bankruptcy order. My hon. Friend has confirmed that the drafting of new clause 20 would enable such a compensation order or criminal bankruptcy order to be made. Amendment No. 61, on my reading of it, would not enable such orders to be made because that is not technically a sentence. If new clause 20 is pressed to a Division, I shall support it. I would not support amendment No. 61, unless the new clause were defeated.

Mr. Gale: While the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) in Committee was expounding the case for yet another quango, my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) was making —just as eloquently as he has done tonight—the case for his new clause.

The Government have taken on board the disquiet caused by certain sentencing practices and have endeavoured to deal with that in clause 21. All the arguments that were voiced against clause 29 in Committee were given a sympathetic hearing by Ministers who are working on the Bill. Those arguments are valid.

Having gone part of the way to recognising the public diquiet, I hope that the Government will take on board the views expressed in the House tonight, which reflect the points that were made in Committee. I hope that this clause will be accepted here or in another place.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Behind new clause 20 there are two concerns felt by the public. The first is that we are in the middle of an unprecedented crime wave. The second—recently summed up by *The Times*—is that in some way the villains are getting away with it.

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

We are not in the middle of an unprecedented crime wave. Last year, the sociology department at Leicester university produced a study entitled "Violent Disorders in 20th Century Britain", which showed that the average Briton's chance of being murdered was 25 per cent. higher in 1860 than in 1980, and that the rate of violent disturbances in the early years of this century was five to seven times the present rate.

That concern is more illusory than real, but the public believe that in some way the villains are getting away with it. The public have seen many cases reported in the newspapers where vastly over-lenient sentences have apparently been imposed. The key word is "apparently". If people believe that over-lenient sentences can be imposed, their respect for the law will be undermined. We must address that problem.

Mr. Chris Smith: The hon. Gentleman seems to base his rather odd statement that we are not in the middle of an unprecedented crime wave on the fact that violent disorder in the streets is less now than it was in the 19th century. Does he not realise that all the evidence from the crime studies that have been conducted over the last few years shows that the crimes of greatest concern to the people of this country are assault on the street, robbery, burglary, and sexual offences against women, not violent disorder or street rowdyism? Those crimes are vastly on the increase.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman has revealed the inadequacy of his argument in referring to the last few year. I am fully aware of the rising crime rate over the last few years and over the last 30 years. The hon. Gentleman will find that the rate of violent disturbance — a composite concept that the sociology department at Leicester university put together to get a much greater over-view of what happened in the early years of this century—which has increased over the last 30 years, is only a fraction, 20 per cent., of what it was in the early years of this century. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman will find that an inconvenient argument, when he is trying to convince everybody that we are in the middle of an unprecedented crime wave, but it happens to be the truth.

To deal with the sense that people have that over-lenient sentences are being imposed, there has to be some recognition by the House that that matter will be dealt with. The argument, against the prosecution having a right of appeal do not hold any water. The prosecution has a role, and in Crown court, when recorders are about to pass sentence, they will often ask the prosecutor,"In this case, Mr. So-and-so, what powers do I have?"

It is true that the prosecution should never advocate a particular sentence, and the bar's code of conduct makes that clear. However, nobody who supports new clause 20 suggests that prosecuting counsel should advocate a sentence, in the sense that he should use all his powers of oratory to get an appropriate sentence. The prosecution has an interest, in the same way as the defence and society have an interest, in making sure that the sentence is right. I cannot see that the prosecution's role is compromised by making sure that the relevant considerations go before the court. That can be done in a way that falls far short of active advocacy.

Another point that is sometimes put is that it would be unfair on the individual judge if he were to be taken to the Court of Appeal and pilloried because of one error in a decision. There would be protection for many judges if their cases could be taken to the Court of Appeal in the way that new clause 20 contemplates. Often it is clear to a lawyer reading a report of a case that there must have been more to it than meets the eye. Some of us have been involved in cases about which we have read in the newspapers, and, without being inaccurate, such reports have given a wrong impression of what transpired. It would be useful if the public could be satisfied that a case that looked over-lenient had gone to the Court of Appeal and been reviewed. The public would be reassured when they could say, "Well, it looked to us as if this were an over-lenient sentence, but perhaps it is not."

Clause 29 has two things in its favour. The first is the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Minister in putting forward the case in Committee. That is about the best thing that it has going for it. The second is that it is at least the thin end of the wedge. I will not repeat the arguments that have already been made. However, when the public finally realise that a particular case has gone to the Court of Appeal, that a statement has been made that an over-lenient sentence has been given, and then the villain has got away scot-free, they will be distressed. My hon Friend the Minister fairly conceded in Committee that if this approach does not work, the only avenue that will be left is that contemplated in new clause 20.

If I thought that my hon. Friend the Minister had come to the House, after a Damascene conversion, and was prepared to go along with new clause 20, I could welcome that. I do not see any point in forcing a Division on new clause 20 when, in all likelihood, it would probably fail. If the way in which I and my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) have put the case shows that sooner rather than later the Government will be forced to accept the inevitable, I would find that a welcome development.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for selecting these amendments at a late hour, because if that had not happened we would not have been able to debate this important matter. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) will withdraw his new clause and allow the House to vote on amendment No. 60, which will enable us to delete clause 29. I support all those who have spoken against clause 29. I do not support my hon. Friends who want to see new clause 20 or amendments Nos. 61 or 62 passed.

Clause 29 is another nonsense, introduced by the Government to show, in a sort of gung ho fashion, that they are doing something about law and order. I repeat that is not necessary because it is patently obvious to anybody with the slightest interest in law and order that the Government have introduced an endless catalogue of measures—*[Interruption.]*—and if Opposition Members do not accept that, let them read the speech that I made in the debate last Friday, when I dealt with many aspects of Government policy in this sphere, and even then I did not cover the entire catalogue of law and order measures that we have taken. The Government have no need to introduce nonsensical provisions, in the humble belief that they have not done enough to satisfy the people, when they have done more than any other Administration in history to deal with law and order.

1.30 am

Nearly everyone at the Bar and, I suspect, nearly everyone on the Bench, believes that clause 29 is a load of nonsense. Why have the Government introduced it? It is a hollow pretence and it reminds me of an advertisement for the *Today* newspaper which I see displayed as I drive to the House each day. It portrays three funny-looking judges and says something about the short and curlies having us in their grip. It is meant to hold the judiciary up to ridicule and make them figures of fun.

There is no need for *Today* to spend money on expensive advertising to do that. People need only read clause 29. That will hold the judiciary up to ridicule and contempt when the public learn that when a matter is referred to the Court of Appeal for assessment as to whether a sentence should be higher, the Court of Appeal will be able only to say, "Yes, it is a terribly low sentence, but we cannot do anything about it."

The people who will get the kicking are the members of the Government, because the public will ask, "What are the Government doing? This measure sends matters to the Court of Appeal, which cannot do anything about them. What a load of idiots we have governing the country." —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I assure Opposition Members that that would be a totally wrong conclusion. Anyway, it will not happen, because clause 29 will not remain in the Bill, either because we will vote it out tonight, or, because their Lordships will do with it what they did with it on the last occasion, and remove it from the Bill.

If clause 29 were left in, it would represent a hollow sham which would reduce the respect in which the judges are held. Why should an intelligent Government introduce such an absurd measure? The answer given is that they want the Court of Appeal to lay down guidelines, which is a sensible suggestion. The Court of Appeal should say that in rape, drug, DHSS and other cases the courts should take account of certain parameters when sentencing.

The trouble is that nobody in the Home Office, nor, it seems, in the Government, is aware that we already have those guidelines and that the Lord Chief Justice in every important case lays down guidelines. I have them with me. I hold a book which every judge should have before him when he decides what sentence to pass in a criminal case. I shall refer only to rape, which is one of the most important and worrying matters about which people are saying that sentences are inadequate. In *R.v.* Billam in 1986 the Lord Chief Justice laid down guidelines, and I shall refer only to the heads of paragraphs:

"There are . . . many reported decisions of the Court which give an indication of what current practice ought to be and it may be useful to summarise their general effect.

For rape committed by an adult without any aggravating or mitigating features, a figure of five years should be taken as the starting point in a contested case."

The Lord Chief Justice goes on to deal with the situation if two men are involved and the situation where the victim is living with the person who has committed rape. He says in the next paragraph:

"At the top of the scale comes the defendant who has carried out what might be described as a campaign of rape, committing the crime upon a number of women or girls. He represents a more than ordinary danger and a sentence of fifteen years or more may be appropriate.

Where the defendant's behaviour has manifested perverted or psychopathic tendencies or gross personality disorder . . . a life sentence will not be inappropriate.

The crime should in any event be treated as aggravated by any of the following factors,"

and he lists eight factors.

Those are the guidelines and they are there for every judge in a criminal case to see. They are there to be followed. There is no point in referring these matters to the Court of Appeal to establish guidelines, when they are there already.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the hon. Gentleman explain, because as he read that out the Minister of State was saying, "We all know that" and his advice to the Home Office and other Departments must be that that is the case, what is the justification for the Government's acting against what is a fact and must be their own advice? What is his explanation for this ridiculous Government position?

Mr. Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt ask my hon. Friend that when he replies and I am sure that he will get a better and more defensive reply than he will get from me.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. and learned Friend has read out what the guidelines might be in a case such as rape. What would he do about cases where the judges do not follow the guidelines?

Mr. Lawrence: I am afraid that not much can be done if the judges refuse to follow the guidelines. It is up to the Lord Chief Justice to breathe a word in their ears and say that if they go on behaving in that extraordinary way and do not follow the guidelines they are not fit to sit as judges.

I am afraid that it is simply not possible to be sure that, if the Court of Appeal says that the appropriate senence in a particular case was 10 years and not five, the next judge who has to consider it will take any notice of that. If he is not taking any notice of the existing guidelines, he is not going to take any notice of the next lot of guidelines.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the proposition that he is putting forward as the status quo can in no way deal with the judge who consistently passes lenient sentences, which both clause 29 and new clause 20 tackle and his position does not?

Mr. Lawrence: I can tell my hon. Friend, for what it is worth—he is a practitioner at the Bar, as I am—that very often the cases that cause a great deal of concern in the press have been misreported. If they went to the Court of Appeal it would say that the judge was perfectly right to impose that sentence. Too often the public are concerned because a matter has been inadequately reported. I have very often been engaged in cases where the members of the press are there at the opening of the case, they are not there throughout the case, they are there when the verdict is returned, and then they splurge all over the headlines some rubbish that has absolutely nothing to do with the case.

I have a feeling—and this is another problem—that some of the cases will be referred to the Court of Appeal and the judges there will say that the sentence was perfectly adequate and was the appropriate sentence in the circumstances. So it will not always happen that judges who impose lenient sentence will be in the wrong. If they go on and on doing so, they will very soon find that they are not asked by the Lord Chief Justice to sit and will shortly be removed from office. So there is a way of dealing with it.

There is no magic way of making sure that if the Court of Appeal says in a certain case that the appropriate

[Mr. Lawrence]

sentence is this and not that, in future, in different circumstances, with a different defendant, at a different time, in a different place and with different facts, the same sentence will be given. That idea is wholly illusory. It will not happen.

There are two positions that can be adopted. Either we say, that is a shame, therefore we will give them the power to change the sentence, or we say—that is a sham, we will get rid of the clause and leave the status quo. I am in favour of the latter step. I am opposed to the new clauses, which would give the Court of Appeal additional powers fundamentally because it would place the person sentenced into a form of double jeopardy which would be contrary to the history and practice of our courts. We have to remember that our courts are not geared to finding the truth. Our courts are geared, under the confrontationary system that we have, to see whether the prosecution can establish guilt. That is a very different matter, and once one starts dismantling parts of the existing system, one will have to dismantle many other things that hang on to it.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: My hon. and learned Friend is a lawyer and I am not, but surely double jeopardy is about innocence or guilt; it is not about sentencing. New clause 20 and amendment No. 61 are about corecting errors of sentence. There is no double jeopardy involved.

Mr. Lawrence: I beg to differ. I think that there is a sort of double jeopardy over whether a man is convicted or acquitted, and there is another sort of double jeopardy over whether a man is put on probation or gets five years or 10 years.

There are all sorts of circumstances in which it is grossly unfair to try a man again. If one puts a man up in the Court of Appeal and the Court of Appeal has not seen the judge, has not spoken to him or heard the circumstances in which he gave the sentence, other than a brief outline, and it has not seen the defendant or the witnesses, it is not in a position to judge anything. The Court of Appeal will be deprived of everything that happened at the trial and the defendant will be assessed by some judges who are sitting on high saying, "We think that the sentence is wrong." It is an inherently unjust system. That is one reason why I oppose it.

If my hon. Friends do not accept the first reason, there is another reason why I oppose it, which is also very important. It would require the interference of the prosecution in the process of sentencing, which is diametrically different from the system that we have followed in the past. In the first situation posed by clause 29, it would be the Attorney-General's life which would be made a misery in this place as hon. Members from both sides of the House, whose names it is not necessary for me to mention, would take up his time asking why the case of Bloggs and Bloggs has not been referred to the Court of Appeal. In the new clause 20 situation, in every case where the sentence was less than a victim had thought, the Court of Appeal would have to look at all the papers. How long would it take to get to the Court of Appeal if it had to look at hundreds of cases where victims were complaining that the sentences were less than they thought were right?

Mr. Gale: The judge should have got it right in the first place.

Mr. Lawrence: The judge may have got it right at the beginning, but it is not easy to persuade a victim or somebody whose daughter has been interfered with and the man has gone to prison for only 10 years instead of life that that was a fair sentence.

I am afraid that it is removed from knowledge, understanding or experience of life to conclude that the situation would be different if the Court of Appeal had the right to make decisions and actually to change things. To involve the prosecution in the process of referring matters to the Court of Appeal is a complete change in our system.

My advice to the Government is the same as it was on new clause 19—leave well alone. If they do not, their enthusiasm will do far more harm than good.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I wish to speak to amendment No. 61 which is in my name and that of two hon. Friends. I should first thank Mr. Speaker for putting the amendment back on the Order Paper today.

My amendment will ensure that cases of public concern —I stress "public" concern—shall be referred by the Attorney-General in his quasi-legal, quasi-political capacity to the Court of Appeal to obtain a review of the sentence in question. I do not believe that the floodgates will be opened by the amendment. There will be occasional cases that will be considered outrageous, insufficient, exceedingly lenient and sentences that should be looked at again.

We have to ask ourselves whether sentences today are adequate. What about the deterrent element in our sentencing? Indeed, what about deterrence per se? Clause 29, with which I have great sympathy as far as it goes—although I wish to amend it—establishes a precedent for subsequent cases. The whole of English law is based on precedent and I cannot understand why my hon. Friends are so opposed to precedent, the fact that cases can be looked at again. After all, in some cases all that will be achieved will be good sentencing practice, good sentencing guidelines, presented to this House.

1.45 am

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) was critical of the guidelines. He said that we already had them. But let us be frank, few judges accurately follow them. And in some other cases, which my hon. and learned Friend mentioned, there is nothing wrong in getting a second opinion. I think that that is particularly important. What is wrong with its being referred to the Court of Appeal anyway? If we get a second opinion, at least there is a double chance.

Following the Ealing vicarage rape case, which resulted in lenient sentences given by Mr. Justice Leonard of three and five years respectively for the two vicious rapes, nothing was done to satisfy the public's demand for tougher sentences rather than the outrageously soft sentences that will not deter rapists. We must accept that rape is on the increase, and I am particularly concerned to see stiffer sentences for rape. There should be a natural right—whether it is new clause 20 of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) or my own amendment No. 61—there should be a mechanism for appeal within the Criminal Justice Bill, to redress the balance which gives an unfair advantage to the defence, who could appeal against any sentence if they felt that it was too high, whereas the prosecution could not appeal against a sentence that they felt was too low.

My amendment, I believe, would have given the Attorney-General the automatic right to send any case that he considered to be a matter of public concern to the Court of Appeal for review, when the sentence was a matter of public outcry. This facility could still be supported by the Home Office, whether today or in another place. We do not really need clause 29 in its current form because the public believe that sentences in specific cases will be overturned; yet that is patently wrong and the public must be made to realise quickly that it cannot happen in that way.

Lord Justice Lane prescribed certain guidelines for rape sentences in the case of R. *v.* Billam of 21 February 1986. It seems to me that his guidelines are being ignored in most cases, as he recommended a term of five years to be taken as a starting point in contested rape cases, and a minimum of eight years when a rape is committed by two or more men. Mr. Justice Leonard felt in the Ealing case that the victim did not suffer, as he put it, "so great a trauma". However, it occurred after the most revolting acts committed on her person. Can he really judge how a young woman suffers—particularly as, I understand, the lady in that case is now receiving psychiatric treatment.

I have undertaken a full survey of rape sentences, looking at the guidelines, and the actual time spent under sentence. I can reveal that in 1985 the average sentence given for rape was three and a half years and the average time actually spent in prison was only 20 months. So much for judges listening to the Lord Chief Justice and the public at large. If we are to stamp out rape or at least reduce it substantially, we must have this right to appeal against excessively lenient sentences. It could even be that we should bring in a minimum sentence of 25 years, without remission, for rape. Rape is not just a sick crime, it is almost as bad as murder.

Let us look at a random study of prison statistics, which shows what sentences have been, and examine the length of sentence in years. If someone is sentenced to three years he spends only 16 months in prison; for seven years it is 46 months; for ten years it is 72 months; and for 15 years it is 109 months. Surely we must give out sentences which mean exactly what they say? We must stop the lenient sentences, so that we halt this massive increase in crime both in London and elsewhere, where sexual offences have risen by 6 per cent. in England and Wales and 7 per cent. in London, and where violence against people has gone up by 3 per cent. in England and Wales. If we could, therefore, have these minimum sentences, and if we could have this right to appeal, we would ensure that a sentence meant precisely what it said.

Crime is on the increase and we have to stop the rot. I raised this matter with my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General in a letter of 11 March in which I expressed the concern not just of myself but of other hon. Friends about the inadequate sentences being given out in cases of rape and in other cases. My right hon. and learned Friend made it clear that he was content with the scope for the provision made in clause 29. I make that point because hon. Members on both sides of the House have been saying that the Attorney-General probably would not like the role that he will have under clause 29 as it stands. He made it clear that he is content with the clause as drafted. However, he did not support any extension of the power which I am asking for in my amendment and which is sought too by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West.

The Court of Appeal must have the opportunity to overturn a light sentence. We have a rotten situation, with many crimes being committed. There have been some very inadequate sentences in recent months. They have been highlighted not just by the tabloids but by the sensible newspapers. We must get the right of appeal back on to the statute book, if not tonight then in another place. For that reason, I urge hon. Members to support amendent No. 61.

Mr. Bermingham: Once again the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) seems to have missed the point of our criminal justice system. That is becoming less surprising as the night goes on, because as time passes we learn about the prejudice and the courting of popularity that seems to be taking place on the Government Benches, with some notable and honourable exceptions. The whole principle of our sentencing system is that judges listen to all that is said by the prosecution and by the defence. The whole purpose behind our system is to try to achieve the best sentence possible, bearing in mind all the circumstances.

The one thing we must never have is for the prosecution to have any interest in sentencing. As those hon. Members on both sides of the House who have had the privilege of prosecuting know only too well, a prosecutor must never have an interest in the outcome. He must present the facts impartially, without prejudice or fear. For him to be asked at a later stage to become involved in whether a sentence is right or wrong is to fly in the face of thousands of years of history.

When the hon. Member for Leicester, East talks about the idea of a moral majority, as he did earlier, I become alarmed, because we are allowing emotion to enter into what must be a totally dispassionate exercise. Hon. Members know my views well. What worries me about clause 29 is that we are beginning that dreadful and dangerous process of allowing the prosecution in the form of the Attorney-General to be enticed into entering the whole question of sentencing.

I would not wish to be an Attorney-General—I think that will never happen, in any event—but I would not wish to see any Attorney-General subjected to the pressures that might come from Crown prosecutors who were themselves the subject of pressure, perhaps from clerks in a court or perhaps from police officers, who felt that things were unfair or wrong. In the end the matter might be pushed up the chain to the Attorney. Reality tells us that that would happen. Regardless of what the hon. Member for Leicester, East or others say about the matter —if hon. Members who talked on the subject had a little knowledge of it, it would help enormously—reality says that, because of pressure, prejudice and perhaps ignorance, even the popular press on occasions takes something out of context and begin to pressurise and comment, and so we begin a path.

The art of justice is that those who judge come to the task fresh and impartial. Our system has always been a simple one. It is for the Crown to prove its case and for the defence to prove nothing. It is for the judge to sentence on conviction having heard all the facts and all that has been said for the defendant. Clause 29 seeks to introduce a completely new theory—that somehow the outsider, the person who has not been involved, has not seen the reports or heard the evidence or arguments, can come from afar and say, "This is wrong."

[Mr. Bermingham]

From time to time judges and magistrates are clearly wrong. That is human nature. But are we to take the bad examples and use them as the means of criticising a system that has stood the test of time? The bulk of sentencing in Britain is right. Are we to take the exception, hype it up and use it for political advantage on some occasions as, I regret to say, some hon. Members seek to do? Are we to use it to scream from the rooftops that our judiciary is wrong? Should we not stand back for a little while and simply say that by and large Britain gets it right? Yes, there will be sentences that are wrong. Some may be too severe and those can be corrected, and some may be too lenient and can lead to the Lord Chief Justice, the Court of Appeal or somebody else, issuing guidelines to advise and correct.

If we begin to go down the road of appealing against sentences on behalf of the prosecution, as has been said earlier tonight, we open up a completely new ball game. We destroy a system that has stood the test of time and we begin to allow the popular press, the publicity-hungry politician on occasions to seek to — *[Interruption.]* I hear what the Minister has just said. I regret it. It does not do him justice.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Nor does the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Bermingham: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and much of what he says in this place does not do him justice.

Justice is a precious little bird and it can so easily be crushed on the altar of expediency. It can be crushed by people who seek to use it as a means of political advantage or political popularity. Let us not do that in the House tonight. Let us stand by a system that has stood the test of time and let us support the amendment that crushes clause 29.

Mr. Soley: I can be brief, not least because the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) made the case not only against the new clause but against clause 29. My real anger about the debate stems from the way in which it has arisen. We had a long debate in Committee on an amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), who has also tabled the new clause. He felt so strongly about his amendment that he did not even put it to the vote, and he will act in the same way again tonight. In other words, the debate is purely decorative. We have had it, just as the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, precisely because some hon. Members want to show that they are doing something about the crisis in law and order.

I shall not go over that debate again, but there is one matter on which I disagreed with the hon. and learned Member for Burton. We all know that the crime rate has gone up faster under this Government than any other, Labour or Tory, and the clear-up rate has fallen more dramatically under this Government than any other, Labour or Tory, precisely because of the policies that that have ripped apart Britain's social fabric and made it difficult for communities to rebuild, re-identify and develop the natural crime prevention facilities that exist in any well-structured community.

The problem exists in all Western societies, and has done for 30 years. The Government are charged with making a bad situation worse. In doing that, they try to turn to the decorative bits: we have had several this afternoon and this evening. This afternoon, we discussed bringing back the cane and the birch, and whipping—yes, whipping—10 and 14-year-olds for using offensive language. The present debate is designed to show that there is some muscle in the Government's law and order policies, when there is none.

2 am

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West would receive more commendations if he pushed the matter to a vote. But he will not — just as he did not in Standing Committee—because he knows that, as the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South and the hon. and learned Member for Burton have demonstrated, the new clause is nonsense. I do no intend to repeat everything that was said by the right hon. and Learned Member for Warrington, South, but he was entirely right. The new clause would drag the Attorney-General into an impossible position. He would be questioned on case after case, and asked why he had not referred those cases.

As a couple of Conservative Members pointed out, when cases were referred to the Court of Appeal and it chose not to increase the sentence, the outcry that was heard before would be heard again; the position would be worse than before. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) does not seem to understand—and, by God, his remarks have caused a lot of trouble in this country; he should exercise more responsibility in what he says — that the reporting of crime is notoriously inaccurate. His hon. Friends have referred to that.

Not long ago, we saw some disgraceful reporting in the newspapers, which stated on their front pages that a young man had been given a life sentence for sticking a glass in a publican's face. But it was not even alleged in court that he had committed such an offence. The life sentence had been imposed for an event that took place five or six hours earlier, at a football match. No one was hurt; the young man had kicked out and sworn at a policeman. But the headlines in the British press stated that he had received a life sentence for "glassing" a publican, which the charge did not even mention.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East must take some responsibility for helping to whip up that hysteria. If the reporting of cases were more accurate—as the hon. and learned Member for Burton and the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South have said—we would have a little more confidence in the way that those cases were argued later in the courts. As it is, we can feel no such confidence. We must accept that the mood of hysteria encouraged by debates of this kind undermines the very aspects of our society that we are trying to protect. It undermines the whole concept of justice.

I consider that there is a case for a sentencing council, and that the Government have missed an opportunity to provide for such a council. It would not be the answer to all the problems; but, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, there will be cases in which inappropriate sentences are imposed. The Ealing rape case is an example. The advantage of a sentencing council is that, as the hon. and learned Member for Burton pointed out—he quoted from a book—it would provide a useful guideline, and would make sensible debates on sentencing

possible. We could escape from the highly emotive cases on which the hon. Member for Leicester, East prefers to focus his attention.

There is some discrepancy in sentencing, in terms of both the types of offence involved and the geographical location. The geographical difference is almost more important than anything else. The same offences, with the same background, may attract very different sentences in different parts of the country.

That is not my central point. It is not too late to lose clause 29. It is nonsense, and the other place rightly will not like it. New clause 20 is an insult to those who have bothered to attend the debate, because the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) never intended to put it to the vote here or in Committee. Trying so desperately to get the matter debated and pretending that it is vital to justice and then not putting it to a vote is not convincing behaviour. If the hon. Gentleman and those who support him want to prove me wrong, they will have an opportunity to do so in a moment.

Mr. Mellor: Everyone has had such fun in this debate that I wonder whether my presence is wholly necessary. I am unavoidably here and cast in the role of Aunt Sally, so I shall try to don the mantle with as good a grace as I can muster at 2.6 am.

One thing is absolutely clear. Whatever the Government had chosen to do would have been controversial and much derided by many of the voices that have spoken out in the debate. If we had chosen to do nothing, we would have been condemned by the public for failing to deal with a manifest gap in our procedures, and we would have been condemned by many hon. Members for having fallen below the level of events and legitimate expectation.

By proposing clause 29, which I believe to be a principled response to the problem, we are criticised by those who say that we should not do anything and by those who say that it is a milk-and-water measure and that it would be far better to have the red meat of a full-bloooded prosecution right of appeal.

If we had chosen a full-blooded prosecution right of appeal, it is perfectly clear that many would have rejected it. Many have said so in terms—the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), there was a guilty plea by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), and at best there was cautious rapture from my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle).

As to the last suggestion that we heard, the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) is very well-meaning and I do not wish to be nasty to him at 2.7 am, but the idea that a sentencing council gets into the target, let alone hits the bull's-eye of the problem is a delusion. He deludes himself if he thinks that it is a remotely relevant proposal. The kindest thing that one can say about a sentencing council is that it involves a lot of other great and good people in the functions of the judiciary laying down the very guidelines that certain judges are flouting. We would be in exactly the same situation with a sentencing council. If the hon. Member for Hammersmith wants to have quiet nights and to keep his blood pressure down, he must pray that he is never on this side of the Chamber, but remains where he is where he can get away with speeches such as he treated us to tonight.

All of the fair-minded people who are gathered together in the House at 2.8 am will agree that the Government would have been criticised whatever they had done. We must ask whether we have taken an appropriate course. I do not think that doing nothing is a viable option. It is only those who are cloaked in Temple complacency or the irresponsibility of Opposition who can suggest that doing nothing is a viable option.

In 1985 we brought forward a proposal which was roundly rejected in another place, but at least one of those who was prominent in rejecting it, Lord Denning, now regrets the grounds on which he rejected it and proposes to reject it from the other side of the fairway. We are all entitled to change our mind. We responded in 1985 to legitimate public concern about a small minority of sentences for serious offences that were widely publicised and felt by the public, rightly or wrongly, to be objectionably low, with the result that public confidence in the criminal justice system was adversely affected.

After the clause was rejected by the other place, we debated the issue in Committee after the Bill had arrived in this place. I said something that appears to have borne the test of time more than most of the remarks that I make in this place. I said that the other place had rejected the remedy but had not abolished the problem, which would continue to recur. I argued that every few months there would be a case that would cause widespread public disquiet to the extent that the noise would be heard even through ermine earmuffs, and that we would find ourselves in precisely the same situation one year or two years later. I said that the public would not be denied having their legitimate concerns considered within this place. A number of celebrated cases have emerged and there has been great public furore, and legitimately so.

But what has happened? The furore has died away, but what constructive result has emerged from it? What guarantee do we have for those who felt that the way in which cases were dealt with wrongly originally could be rectified? Even more fundamentally, what prospect is there under present arrangements that similar facts recurring in another court would be treated differently by the judge hearing the case? The answer is that we have the worst of both worlds. We do not have the remedy of re-sentencing, for which one or two were crying out, to deal with cases of this sort, and we have no guarantee that change would be made if the case were to be considered again.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton treated us to a mettlesome stallion of a speech that could have been delivered by an Old Baileyite in an end-of-the-pier show. As for his plea in mitigation on behalf of the Government, I found myself as the client sitting in the dock trembling, as I know so many of his clients have done at the Old Bailey. I felt rather like one of the many who have been sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment after a judge has listened to one of my hon. and learned Friend's eloquent speeches. I might not have had much of a case, but a better defence could have been advanced than that which was put forward, which was rather along the lines, "While we were all idiots, we were well-meaning idiots and did our best, and really we did quite a lot."

The fundamental flaw in my hon. and learned Friend's position was revealed when he read out the guidelines which were laid down in R. *v.* Billam. I shall quote one instance where the guidelines did not seem to have been followed, and it can be said that none of us was the wiser or even marginally better informed some months after the

[Mr. Meller]

sentence was passed. The case arose at the Old Bailey in the summer when a man abducted a girl from the highway, pushed her into a shed, had forcible sexual intercourse with her and transmitted to her a venereal disease. He appeared at the Old Bailey, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

Many people wanted to know—I use that careful formulation because Ministers are not supposed to have opinions on these matters—how that fitted in with the guidelines in Billam. The general understanding of the guidelines was that even if it was appropriate to reduce the sentence for a plea of guilty, the transmission of venereal disease from the rapist to the unfortunate victim was an aggravating feature, and the Lord Chief Justice's suggestion was that the starting point for the sentence in such a case was eight years.

What are we to say six months after all the harroosh has died away? Is the transmission of venereal disease to a victim an aggravating feature, or is it not? Sadly, such an event is not so rare and we ought to know the answer to that question. But we do not know the answer. If a similar case were to occur tomorrow, or the day after, or next month, precisely the same sentence might be passed, and it would be greeted with precisely the same outcry as greeted the sentence that was passed last summer.

2.15 am

The Government's proposals would address that point. The Lord Chief Justice, if he chose to do so, would be able to take up that point in another case. The Court of Appeal would be directly faced with the issue if the matter proceeded on the Attorney-General's reference. The guidelines are not equally robust in every case. It cannot be thought to be mischievous and ludicrous that I should suggest to the House that it would be helpful if the Court of Appeal were to adjudicate.

A further point relates to the equally controversial Ealing vicarage case. Objection seemed to be taken to the apportionment rather than to the length of the sentences. There could have been no appeal on the basis that the sentences were lenient. In total length they were almost certainly not lenient. However, a matter of principle was raised that would be covered by clause 29; whether it is appropriate for a judge to divide one event into two or three bits, or whether he should pass sentence on the gravest offence and then pass concurrent sentences on the rest. The perfectly legitimate harroosh over the Ealing vicarage case has faded away, and none of us is any the wiser about how a court should deal with future cases of that kind. We can only hope that some judges read the newspapers.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend saying that the only justification for referring cases to the Court of Appeal for further consideration would be a technical matter that appeared to be in doubt? That is very different from what is thought to be the effect of clause 29.

Mr. Meller: My hon. and learned Friend is leading counsel, whereas I, a humble junior, hung up my wig the best part of six years ago. Clause 29 says:

"If it appears to the Attorney-General that a sentence passed by the Crown Court on a trial on indictment raises a question of public importance"—

I pause to say that both of the matters that I have laid before the House are surely matters of public importance—

"he may, with the leave of the Court of Appeal, refer the case to them to obtain their opinion on the principles which should be observed in sentencing in similar cases in the future."

In other words, it is not a witch-hunt against the judge, or even an inquest into what happened. It provides an opportunity to use as a starting point a particular case that has shaken public confidence in the criminal justice system and gives to the Court of Appeal the opportunity to issue specific guidance, if it so wishes—it would be a matter for the Court of Appeal—that would allow the courts to make a better fist of dealing with a similar case if it arose next week. Surely, that provision is not worthy of some of the epithets that have been heaped upon it during this debate.

I am sad that among those ranged against me tonight is my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South, whom I respect more than many others of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I take very seriously the strictures that he has heaped upon the Government. I am very sorry that on this occasion I cannot agree with him; almost invariably we agree. I shall therefore, put a previous conviction to him in the hope that he will see some merit in what I have said.

Looking through my right hon. and learned Friend's antecedents, I discover that for some time he was incarcerated in the Home Office and that in 1972 he introduced a Criminal Justice Bill that contained a provision that could be called the twin of this provision. It dealt with the right of the Attorney-General to appeal if a judge had misdirected himself and thereby committed an error in law that led to an acquittal which, under the rules, could not be appealed against. If the judge had misdirected the jury so that the jury had convicted, there could have been an appeal on a point of law. However, on the assumption that the defendant walked out of the court a free man, but the feeling was that the judge had got it wrong, the opportunity for appeal should be taken for future guidance—I stress for future guidance—so that other courts should get it right. The case could then proceed on the Attorney-General's reference.

It is worth noting that the Attorney-General's notice would specifically not affect and has never affected the result of the case. Even if it has been determined subsequently that the individual was wrongly acquitted because the judge got the law wrong, that individual is not re-indicted. That cannot be very much different from the point that public confidence would be shaken if the public discovered that, notwithstanding the Court of Appeal saying that a sentence had apparently been wrong, the defendant was not re-sentenced. If a defendant has been wrongly acquitted, and is held to have been so, because the point of law taken by the judge is found by the Court of Appeal to be spurious, nevertheless, that individual continues to go free. It was because of the success of that proposal, which has not led to howls of derision for the Attorney-General or the Government and which has worked perfectly amiably for 15 years, that we saw fit to attach this modest proposal to the Bill to include sentencing, not just decisions on points of law.

Mr. Mark Carlisle: I have listened with great interest to the cogent defence that my hon. Friend the Minister has advanced for clause 29. Surely he would agree that there is a substantial difference between the power to refer a

point of law, which, once settled, can be used in other cases, and the power to refer a sentence which must always very much depend on the individual case of the person whom the judge is sentencing. That does not create the same effect. Perhaps I was somewhat unfair earlier. I accept that in the words used in clause 29 the Government have deliberately decided to narrow the original proposal that was defeated in another place through the use of the words:

"a sentence . . . raises a question of public importance."

I still believe, for the reasons that I have given, that it will not assuage public concern. I suggest that there is a distinction between referring matters of law and referring individual sentences.

Mr. Mellor: I accept my right hon. and learned Friend's sincerity on that point. However, there is no doubt that clause 29 is more carefully phrased, with the benefit of hindsight, than the earlier provision. I repeat that clause 29 states that the Attorney-General may

"refer the case to them to obtain their opinion on the principles which should be observed in sentencing in similar cases in future."

In other words, he will take the opportunity raised by a particular sentence. More often than not the argument against a sentence is not that it is just wrong in a vacuum, but that it is wrong in the context of a specific point. That is certainly true about the allegation of the transmission of a veneral disease.

We are entitled to look to the future. I submit that it should not be held against us if we choose to stay our hand and not weave into the proposal the kind of double-jeopardy arrangement that would otherwise exist if defendants were to be re-sentenced.

To my mind the principal and most compelling defence of clause 29 is that we cannot continue to tolerate a position in which an outcry ebbs away without anything positive emerging from that outcry because in the end that outcry has nowhere positive to go.

Mr. Soley: I think that the Minister shares my concern—he did in Committee—about decisions being made in the heightened atmosphere of some of the cases that we have mentioned. Does he envisage that while the process is taking place, the discussion of the case will remain sub judice, or will the sub judice rule not apply as the case no longer refers to a particular person?

Mr. Mellor: I do not think that the sub judice rule need be as tight as when a jury is considering a case. It would not differ from the rule that applies now when cases go to appeal, bearing in mind that they are dealt with by professional judges, not lay people. There could be some discussion on that.

Mr. Soley: Will that Minister clarify that a little? Is he saying that there could be discussion in the press about the merits of the sentence?

Mr. Mellor: The rules that apply to normal appeals would apply here. Some limited discussion—more than is permitted before a case goes before a jury—would be allowed. We would have to accept the guidance of the court, because in matters of contempt, that would be within its remit, not ours.

I hope that I have established at the very least that doing nothing is not an option and that the idea of doing nothing comes only from those whose experiences in the Temple blind them to what the public think about this. They put themselves as I have said, in the position of the doctors in Hilaire Belloc's famous poem:

"They answered, as they took their fees,
'There is no cure for this disease'."

I cannot possibly support that proposition, and I am saddened that one or two experienced hon. Members should have done so.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is clause 29(2) meant to be exhaustive merely to give examples of what is covered by the word "sentence"? I am specifically anxious to know, if this is meant to be exhaustive, why it does not include an order for criminal bankruptcy or compensation, which is a form of redress, the absence of which can rightly cause public outrage and a private sense of gross injustice?

Mr. Mellor: Criminal bankruptcy is being abolished in the Bill. Compensation is not technically part of a sentence. Whether it should be is an interesting point, and I should like to reflect on that.

I shall now deal with those who say not that we should do nothing but that we should have a full prosecution right of appeal. I fully understand why my hon. Friends advance that case, but that would be an unjustifiably over-elaborate response to the particular problems that we face. About 89,000 Crown court sentences were passed last year. It is hard to think of more than a handful that excited much public opprobrium. The problem is not that too few people are sent to prison or that they are sent to prison for too short a period overall — that is demonstrable in figures with which I shall not weary the House—but the one or two celebrated cases which raise public anguish, especially those crimes of serious sexual violence or other crimes of violence which become news on the principle that they are unusual. The dog biting the man is not newsworthy; the man biting the dog is. We must address that point.

I attach importance to the point raised by a number of hon. Members, that it would change the character of the prosecution. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) was not particularly convincing when he said that the new clause would not have that much of an impact on the prosecution. The prosecution would need to have its own sentencing policy. It would have to be clear in every given case how the sentence fitted in with its own guidelines. That would be objectionable. If the prosecution had to delve into social inquiry reports, that would also be objectionable. But unless it did so, how could it decide whether the judge had sentenced properly, when he is entitled to take account of matters contained in social inquiry reports in determining the extent of the mitigation. I said in Committee that if we found this proposal did not work, the question of a prosecution right of appeal would have to be high on the agenda. I repeat that as a consolation to my hon. Friends.

I hope that I have not outstayed my welcome, but this was a stimulating debate. Someone had to speak for poor, benighted clause 29. I believe that there is a far better case for it than some of my hon. Friends advanced.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), I should like to deal with the point raised by the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle). Mr. Speaker selected new clause 20 for debate and the House may divide on it. The amendments were taken with it, so there will be no vote on the amendments.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful for the fact that we have had this debate. I hope that hon. Members who participated in it do not share the view of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) that it has been theatrical and a waste of time, but agree that we have achieved something. The hon. Gentleman tabled, but has not moved, eight clauses, so the pot is calling the kettle black.

2.30 am

It would be churlish of me and my colleagues who support new clause 20 not to admit that half a cake is better than none. If my hon. Friend the Minister will reconsider the matter, and as we want to see appeals brought forward, clause 29 is better than nothing. Perhaps it is now up to those in the other place, led by Lord Denning and Lord Chief Justice Lane, who expressed his view in a speech at the Mansion House, to debate the matter further. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 21

ALTERATION OF NAMES OF PETTY SESSIONS AREAS OUTSIDE INNER LONDON AREA

'The following sections shall be inserted after section 24 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979—

"*Alteration of names of petty sessions areas outside inner London area*

24A.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this and the next following section, a magistrates' courts committee for an area mentioned in section 19(2) above other than the City of London may at any time submit to the Secretary of State a draft order altering the name of the petty sessions area for which they are the committee or, if they are the committee for more than one petty sessions area, the name of any of those areas.

(2) Subject to the provisions of this and the next following section, where such a committee submit a draft order to the Secretary of State under this section, he may by statutory instrument make the order either in the terms of the draft or with such modifications as he thinks fit.

(3) Any order under this section may contain transitional and other consequential provisions.

Procedure relating to s.24A

24B.—(1) Before submitting to the Secretary of State a draft order under section 24A of this Act, a magistrates' courts committee—

(a) shall consult the council of the non-metropolitan county, metropolitan district or outer London borough concerned and the magistrates of the petty sessions area to which their proposals relate; and

(b) after complying with paragraph *(a)* above, shall send a copy of their proposals to every interested authority and take into consideration any objections made in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed time.

(2) A magistrates' courts committee submitting to the Secretary of State a draft order under section 24A of this Act shall comply with such requirements (if any) as to notice as may be prescribed; and the Secretary of State, before making an order under that section otherwise than in accordance with a draft submitted to him by the magistrates' courts committee, shall send a copy of his proposals to the committee, to the council of the non-metropolitan county, metropolitan district or outer London borough concerned and, if a non-metropolitan county is concerned, to every interested authority.

(3) Before making any order under section 24A of this Act the Secretary of State shall take into consideration any objections made in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed time, and may cause a local inquiry to be held.

(4) For the purposes of this section—

(a) "interested authority", in relation to any order or draft order concerning a non-metropolitan county, means the council of any district in the county which is wholly or partly included in the area to which the order or draft order relates; and

(b) an order shall be deemed to be made in accordance with a draft order if either it is made in terms of the draft order or the departures from the draft order do not, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, effect important alterations in the draft order."'

—*[Mr. Merlyn Rees.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 95, in Title, line 9, after 'cases' insert 'the alteration of names of petty sessions areas.'.

Mr. Rees: I have not stayed up so late for about 25 years, and I did not realise that such things still went on. In moving the new clause I am secure in the knowledge of success, so it is worth it. In suggesting this measure I have been aided and abetted by my wife, who is the chairman of the Harrow bench, which came into being a year ago. I am grateful to the staff of the Home Office for providing the new clause and to the Ministers for allowing that. I am secure in the support of the hon. Members for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page) and for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) who have an interest in the matter. Of course, the clerk of the court, Mr. Gordon Cropper, has played an important part.

The new clause and consequential amendment are concerned not only with Harrow, because other petty sessional areas will want to make changes. My main aim is to allow the new Harrow bench, which is a year old today, to call itself Harrow Gore. About 25 and 30 years ago I was the parliamentary candidate for Harrow, and having failed on those occasions it is good to do something for that area. I went to school there, my children grew up there, I met my wife there and I have an affinity to the area.

For the benefit of other areas which want to take similar steps, the new clause inserts after section 24 of the Justices of the Peace Act 1979 new sections 24A and 24B. Despite all the efforts of the bench, it was not previously possible to make the changes, for reasons which are self-evident. The new clause aims to confer such a power and to make relevant subsidiary provisions.

The new sections set out the procedures that will have to be followed. Under new section 24A the Committee may submit a draft order to the Secretary of State. Under new section 24A(2) the Secretary of State may make the order — he is not required to do so — or make modifications. The rest of the new clause is technical, and there is an amendment to the short title of the Bill.

Why all the trouble so that Harrow can call itself Harrow Gore? The Gore area of Middlesex — the old hundred — is 600 years old. It describes a triangular piece of land where the Moot court was originally. The site is still known and is at the meeting place of Harrow, Kingsbury, Stanmore and Wembley. Out of that came the petty sessional area of Gore. Why lose it? It was an interesting court. Sir William Gilbert, of Gilbert and Sullivan, was chairman at the turn of the century.

Miss Audrey Chamberlain has written a history of the court. She points out that when Lord Hailsham referred to the Wealdstone court in his book "The Door where in I went", he mentioned that there was a chairman who was reported to have said to a motorist,

"In this case the bench consider there is a doubt. We do not intend to give you the benefit of it."

Things have improved since those days, and not just because Sir William Gilbert used Gore as the title of his light opera "Ruddigore". When that opera was recently revived in London, the *Daily Telegraph* said that the spirit of Gilbert and Sullivan was alive and well and once more abroad. In some small way the spirit of Gilbert and Sullivan is abroad in this House tonight, in that we are bothering about something so small.

It is deeper than that. Over the last 20 years local government reform has swept aside areas and changed names without a thought to the history of localities. The Boundary Commission reported to the House and came up with names and areas that were plain daft. It is important that courts outside London are allowed in some small way—as they are in other areas—to maintain history and remember the past.

It is easy to refer to suburbia as subtopia. It is easy to be sardonic with Macaulay who said:

"An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia."

I do not do it for that reason. In the 1920s and 1930s those areas of Middlesex were covered with houses. Old areas were virtually obliterated out to the area of Watford. Those areas grew grass for the horses of London. In 1902 Laurence Housman wrote:

"Hendon, and further out afield
Low water-meads are in his ken,
And lonely pools by Harrow Weald".

This is not possible any more, but I like and lived in that area. It is a good area, which happens to have the wrong political views. Gilbert is sitting up there in the elysian fields that are something like Stanmore Common and Harrow Weald Common. When I say, "Long live Gore," I imagine Gilbert is saying, "Ruddigore." I commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his brevity. I am sure that he, having had to wait so long, has learnt a great deal tonight—as I have—about what the lawyers mean when they use the term "brief".

Mr. Meller: The right hon. Gentleman is a well-respected and well-liked Member of this House. With great pleasure I say that we happily accept his new clause. I am sorry that he has had to wait so long to propose it.

Certainly, the great value of the magistracy is that it can respond to and reflect local feelings and traditions. Perhaps on nothing do these run higher than on the names of the areas. I am glad to accept this. My last word of commendation to the right hon. Gentleman is that, as Gilbert himself would have said, "He is an Englishman."

Mrs. Golding: No, he is Welsh.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I do not want to trespass on the linguistic and legalistic difficulties into which the Minister has got himself. However, I wish briefly to support the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), and thank him for doing something to right a wrong. I speak with some specific knowledge having, before coming to the House, practised in the court of which he spoke.

The right hon. Gentleman is a constituent of mine, so I am willing to ask that the import and tenor of what he is asking for a specific court be taken on by the Government in other respects. The borough in which both he and I live, the London borough of Southwark, has, for example, no county court by the name of Southwark. There is a Lambeth county court, which could easily be called the Lambeth and Southwark county court, so that people have an association with a court that is theirs. Some of the magistrates courts in inner London, and not just those in outer London, now do not naturally describe to people the area to which they relate. Courts are an important part of the fabric of the community, and the definitions of the boundaries of those are important.

I hope that the Government will take seriously on board the expressed wish of a former Home Secretary that we do not so carve up our geography that we also lose our history and give people an ever-decreasing sense of identity. What better way of doing that than making our court names once again consistent with their history and their geography? That would help both the identity of the court and the identity of the citizens whom the courts are there to serve.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause accordingly read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 28

DISCLOSURE OF PROCEEDS OF OFFENCES

'(1) If any bank or financial institution, or any other body suspects that any proceeds of drug trafficking or gold bullion smuggling are or have been under its control or in passage through its banking or financial system, it may disclose the circumstances to the Chief Officer of Police for the area, or to any constable in his stead, and may follow any directions which he may give.

(2) In disclosing information or following the directions of the police, in accordance with subsection (1) above, any institution shall have statutory protection and shall not be liable to any person for breach of contract, confidence or duty in that respect.'.—*[Mr. Alex Carlile.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I move this new clause because of certain evidence that is now in the public domain concerning large-scale gold bullion smuggling. This clause is not well drafted, and I apologise for that. I will deal with the matter quickly, because I hear messages of sympathy from the Minister, and I do not want to lose his sympathy by prolixity. I recognise that drugs are provided for adequately in section 24 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act, which I supported.

Johnson Matthey Bankers specifically gave rise to this new clause. That bank lost a great deal of money as a result of large-scale smuggling of gold bullion. Considerable international efforts are being made to track down those responsible, and the proceeds of the smuggling. The money resulting from the smuggling of gold bullion has been laundered through both domestic banks and banks abroad. They include those in the City of London and others in the Isle of Man and in Florida.

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

A matter for major concern is that some of the banks have strong suspicions that the money represented both the proceeds of gold bullion smuggling and also fraud of a sister bank, JMB. The banks concerned, it would appear, would have liked to disclose their suspicions to the police. However, the case of Tournier *v.* the National Provincial bank of England, which was decided in 1924, does not make it easy for the banks to know what their duty is, and where their responsibilities lie. There are those who say that Tournier's case imposes on banks an obligation of secrecy. Whether that is so is in doubt, as can be seen from the difference between Lords Denning and Boardman in the debate in the other place in Committee on the Drug Trafficking Offences Act.

2.45 am

The object of the new clause is to permit banks to disclose such information as they have which gives rise to suspicion in the bank's mind, and yet to protect banks from any possible consequences such as breach of contract arising from that disclosure.

For gold bullion smuggling, there is no requirement for as severe provisions as are clearly required for drug trafficking offences, and as are provided under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act. Nevertheless, something is required.

It is my considered view that the banks would welcome the clause because it would represent a form of mutual aid in the banking system, which would also increase the public reputation of the banks.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) for raising this point, and I am sympathetic to it. I wish to discuss the issue with the banks and other institutions which would be affected by a wider form of voluntary disclosure provision. I take the hon. and learned Gentleman's points and will report back to him in due course on how we have got on, and I hope to do that in time for any matter which might arise thereby to be inserted in the other place.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the Minister for that rapid and helpful response. I look forward to seeing what he has to propose at a later stage. In the meantime, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the new clause.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

The Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in: page 2, line 8, at end insert

'for England and Wales and Northern Ireland'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following Government amendments: Nos. 6, 7, 4, 8 to 12, 20, 21, 23, 26 to 29, 34, 81, 83 to 85, 87 to 90, 93.

Mr. Hogg: Almost all these amendments have been put down in response to points raised in Committee, mostly by the official Opposition.

Mr. Chris Smith: In Committee the Government responded most constructively to a considerable number of points that were made by Government Back Benchers and particularly by Opposition Members. We are grateful for that constructive approach, which was a good example of a Standing Committee doing the work which Parliament wishes Standing Committees to do. It is with considerable pleasure therefore that we see so many of the points which we made now enshrined in these amendments. We are happy to give them a fair wind through the House tonight.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 2, line 13, leave out 'carry out in conjunction with the police investigations into' and insert 'investigate'.

No. 3, in page 2, line 15, at end insert—

'(3A) The Director may, if he thinks fit, conduct any such investigation in conjunction either with the police or with any other person who is, in the opinion of the Director, a proper person to be concerned in it'.

No. 5, in page 2, line 22, leave out 'this section' and insert 'subsection (4) above'.

No. 6, in page 2, line 23, leave out 'a barrister or solicitor' and insert—

'*(a)* a barrister in England and Wales or Nothern Ireland; *(b)* a solicitor of the Supreme Court; or *(c)* a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland'.

No. 7, in page 2, line 29, after 'designated', insert 'who is a barrister in England and Wales or a solicitor of the Supreme Court'.

No. 4, in page 2, line 31, after 'Crown Court', insert 'in England and Wales'.

No. 8, in page 2, line 37, after 'designated', insert 'who are barristers in England and Wales or solicitors of the Supreme Court'.

No. 9, in page 2, line 38 after 'Crown Court', insert 'in England and Wales'.

No. 10, in page 2, line 39 *[Clause 1]*, at end insert—

'(10A) Any member so designated who is a barrister in Northern Ireland or a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland shall have—

(a) in any court the rights of audience enjoyed by solicitors of the Supreme Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland and in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, such additional rights of sudience as may be given by virtue of subsection (10C) below; and

(b) in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, the rights of audience enjoyed by barristers employed by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.

(10B) Subject to subsection (10C) below, the reference in subsection (10A)*(a)* to rights of audience enjoyed by solicitors of the Supreme Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland is a reference to such rights enjoyed in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland as restricted by any direction given by the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland under section 50 of the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978.

(10C) For the purpose of giving any member so designated who is a barrister in Northern Ireland or a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Judicature of Northern Ireland additional rights of audience in the Crown Court in Northern Ireland, the Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland may direct that any direction given by him under the said section 50 shall not apply to such members.'.

No. 11, in page 2, line 42, leave out from 'proceedings' to end of line 44 and insert

'include references to the proceedings being discontinued and to the taking of any steps (including the bringing of appeals and making of representations in respect of applications for bail) which may be taken in relation to them.'.

No. 12, in page 2, line 44, at end insert—

'(13) In the application of this section (including that Schedule) to Northern Ireland references to the Attorney General are to be construed as references to him in his capacity as Attorney General for Northern Ireland.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 2

DIRECTOR'S INVESTIGATION POWERS

Amendments made: No. 12A, in page 2, line 45, at end insert

', but only for the purposes of an investigation under section 1 above,'.

No. 13, in page 3, line 4, leave out 'to' and insert 'and'.

No. 14, in page 3, line 37, at end insert—

'(5A) Unless it is not practicable in the circumstances, a constable executing a warrant issued under subsection (4) above shall be accompanied by an appropriate person.

(5B) In subsection (5A) above "appropriate person" means—

(a) a member of the Serious Fraud Office; or

(b) some person who is not a member of that Office but whom the Director has authorised to accompany the constable'.

No. 15, in page 3, line 38, leave out 'compliance with' and insert 'response to'.

No. 16, in page 3, line 39, leave out

'not be used in evidence against him'

and insert

'only be used in evidence against him on a prosecution for an offence under subsection (10A) below'.

No. 17, in page 3, line 44, at end insert—

'(7A) A person shall not under this section be required to disclose information or produce a document in respect of which he owes an obligation of confidence by virtue of carrying on any banking business unless—

(a) the person to whom the obligation of confidence is owed consents to the disclosure or production; or

(b) the Director has authorised the making of the requirement or, if it is impracticable for him to act personally, a member of the Serious Fraud Office designated by him for the purposes of this subsection has done so.'.

No. 18, in page 3, line 46, leave out 'person' and insert 'competent investigator (other than a constable)'.

No. 19, in page 4, line 8, at end insert—

'(10A) A person who, in purported compliance with a requirement under this section,—

(a) makes a statement which he knows to be false or misleading in a material particular; or

(b) recklessly makes a statement which is false or misleading in a material particular, shall be guilty of an offence.

(10B) A person guilty of an offence under subsection (10A) above shall—

(a) on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine or to both; and

(b) on summary conviction, be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum, or to both.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 3

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Amendments made: No. 20, in page 4, line 42 leave out 'and'.

No. 21, in page 4, line 45 at end insert

and—

(c) to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland for the purposes of any prosecution of an offence relating to inland revenue,'.

No. 22, in page 5, line 6, leave out

'(including an enactment contained in an Act passed after this Act).

No. 23, in page 5, line 12, at end insert ', Northern Ireland'.

No. 24, in page 5, line 13, at end insert

'and may only be disclosed by such a member if he is designated by the Director for the purposes of this subsection.

No. 25, in page 5, line 23, after 'Office', insert

'designated by the Director for the purposes of this subsection'.

No. 26, in page 5, line 24, after 'department', insert 'or Northern Ireland department'.

No. 27, in page 5, line 25, at end insert

(including the Crown in right of Her Majesty's Government in Northern Ireland)'.

No. 28, in page 5, line 26, leave out 'and'.

No. 29, in page 5, line 28, after 'Wales', insert ', Northern Ireland'.

No. 30, in page 5, line 28, at end insert '; and

(d) for the purposes of assisting any public or other authority for the time being designated for the purposes of this paragraph by an order made by the Secretary of State to discharge any functions which are specified in the order;'.

No. 31, in page 5, line 32, at end insert

'or Part XV of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986;'.

No. 32, in page 5, line 33, leave out 'the' and insert 'an'.

No. 33, in page 5, line 33 *[Clause 3]*, at end insert—

'*(ba)* an Official Assignee;

(bb) a person appointed to carry out an investigation under section 55 of the Building Societies Act 1986;

(bc) a body administering a compensation scheme uner section 54 of the Financial Services Act 1986;

(bd) an inspector appointed under section 94 of that Act;

(be) a person exercising powers by virtue of section 106 of tha Act;

(bf) an inspector appointed under section 177 of that Act or any corresponding enactment having effect in Northern Ireland;

(bg) an inspector appointed under section 38 of the Banking Act 1987;

(bh) a person exercising powers by virtue of section 44(2) of the Insurance Companies Act 1982;'.

No. 34, in page 5, line 38, leave out 'Great Britain.' and insert 'the United Kingdom'.

No. 35, in page 5, line 39, leave out paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* above and insert 'any of the foregoing paragraphs'.

No. 36, in page 5, line 40, at end insert—

'(6A) An order under subsection (5)*(d)* above may impose conditions subject to which, and otherwise restrict the circumstances in which, information may be disclosed under that paragraph.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 5

NOTICES OF TRANSFER—PROCEDURE

Amendments made: No. 37, in page 7, line 8, at beginning insert

'If the conditions specified in subsection (4A) below are satisfied,'.

No. 38, in page 7, line 12, at end insert—

'(4A) The conditions mentioned in subsection (4) above are—

(a) that the person charged has given his written consent to the powers conferred by subsection (3) above being exercised without his being brought before the court; and

(b) that the court is satisfied that, when he gave his consent, he knew that the notice of transfer had been issued.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 6

DISMISSAL OF TRANSFERRED CHARGE

Amendments made: No. 39, in page 7, line 43 at beginning insert 'Subject to subsection (3A) below,'.

No. 40, in page 7, line 47, at end insert—

[Mr. Chris Smith]

'(3A) The judge may order a person who has made a written statement which it is proposed to adduce in evidence to supplement that statement by oral evidence.

(3B) If—

(a) the judge makes an order under subsection (3A) above; and

(b) the written statement is submitted to the court,

the statement shall not be admitted as evidence unless—

(i) the person who made it gives oral evidence; or

(ii) the judge gives leave for it to be admitted without his doing so.'.

No. 41, in page 8, line 4 leave out 'in pursuance of leave granted under subsection (2) above' and insert 'under this section'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 9

THE PREPARATORY HEARING

Amendment made: No. 42, in page 10, line 16, at end insert—

'(10A) Subject to rules of court made under section 53(1) of the Supreme Court Act 1981 (power by rules to distribute business of Court of Appeal between its civil and criminal divisions), the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal under subsection (10) above shall be exercised by the criminal division of the court; and the reference in that subsection to the Court of Appeal shall be construed as a reference to that division.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 10

PROVISIONS RELATING TO LATER STAGES OF TRIAL

Amendment made: No. 43, in page 10, line 29, at beginning insert 'Unless the judge, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, gives leave,'.

No. 44, in page 10, line 35, leave out 'or the leave of the judge'.

No. 45, in page 10, line 36, after 'regard', insert 'in all cases'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 11

RESTRICTIONS ON REPORTING, APPLICATIONS FOR DISMISSAL AND PREPARATORY HEARINGS

Amendments made: No. 46, in page 10, line 43, after 'broadcast', insert 'or include a cable programme'.

No. 47, in page 11, line 12, leave out 'or broadcast' and insert 'broadcast or included in a cable programme'.

No. 48, in page 11, line 13, leave out 'or broadcast' and insert 'broadcast or include in a cable programme'.

No. 49, in page 11, line 23, leave out 'or broadcast' and insert 'broadcast or include in a cable programme'.

No. 50, in page 11, line 27, leave out 'or broadcast' and insert 'broadcast or included in a cable programme'.

No. 51, in page 11, line 31, after 'names', insert 'ages, home'.

No. 52, in page 11, line 31, leave out 'the parties and witnesses and the ages of'.

No. 53, in page 11, line 32, at end insert—

'*(bb)* any relevant business information;'.

No. 54, in page 11, line 40, at end insert—

'(8A) The following is relevant business information for the purposes of subsection (8) above—

(a) any address used by the accused for carrying on a business on his own account;

(b) the name of any business which he was carrying on on his own account at any relevant time;

(c) the name of any firm in which he was a partner at any relevant time or by which he was engaged at any such time;

(d) the address of any such firm;

(e) the name of any company of which he was a director at any relevant time or by which he was otherwise engaged at any such time;

(f) the address of the registered or principal office of any such company; and

(g) any working address of the accused in his capacity as a person engaged by any such company.

(8B) The addresses that may be published or broadcast or included in a cable programme under subsection (8) above are addresses—

(a) at any relevant time; and

(b) at the time of their publication, broadcast or inclusion in a cable programme.

(8C) In this section—

"engaged" means engaged under a contract of service or a contract for services, and

"relevant time" means a time when events giving rise to the charges to which the proceedings relate occurred.'

No. 55, in page 11, line 41, leave out subsection (9) and insert—

'(9) If a report is published, broadcast or included in a cable programme in contravention of this section, the following persons, that is to say—

(a) in the case of a publication of a written report as part of a newspaper or periodical, any proprietor, editor or publisher of the newspaper or periodical;

(b) in the case of a publication of a written report otherwise than as part of a newspaper or periodical, the person who publishes it;

(c) in the case of a broadcast of a report, any body corporate which transmits or provides the programme in which the report is broadcast and any person having functions in relation to the programme corresponding to those of the editor or a newspaper or periodical;

(d) in the case of an inclusion of a report in a cable programme, any body corporate which sends or provides the programme and any person having functions in relation to the programme corresponding to those of an editor of a newspaper,

shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(10) Proceedings for an offence under this section shall not, in England and Wales, be instituted otherwise than by or with the consent of the Attorney General.

(11) Subsection (1) above shall be in addition to, and not in derogation from, the provisions of any other enactment with respect to the publication of reports of court proceedings.

(12) In this section—

"broadcast" means broadcast by wireless telegraphy sounds or visual images intended for general reception;

"cable programme" means a programme included in a cable programme service;

"publish", in relation to a report, means publish the report, either by itself or as part of a newspaper or periodical, for distribution to the public.'. — *[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 15

PRINCIPLES TO BE FOLLOWED BY COURT

Amendments made: No. 56, in page 12, line 41, leave out from 'court' to second 'to' in line 42.

No. 96, in page 13, line 4, at beginning insert 'any likelihood of unfairness to the accused, or if there is more than one, any of them—

(i) resulting from the admission of the statement, having regard in particular to'.

No. 97, in page 13, line 6, at end insert

'or

(ii) resulting from its exclusion.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 16

STATEMENTS IN DOCUMENTS THAT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR PURPOSES OF CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS OR INVESTIGATIONS

Amendments made: No. 98, in page 13, line 7, after 'statement', insert

'which is admissible in criminal proceedings by virtue of section 13 or 14 above'.

No. 99, in page 13, line 7, at end insert 'the court to'

No. 124, in page 13, line 8, leave out 'or 19' and insert ', 19 or 20'.

No. 100, in page 13, line 15, leave our from 'justice' to second 'to' in line 16 and insert

'and in considering whether its admission would be in the interests of justice, the court shall have regard to all the circumstances and in particular—

(i).'

No. 101, in page 13, line 18, leave out from 'likelihood' to 'if' in line 19 and insert

'of unfairness to the accused or, if there is more than one, any of them, resulting from its admission'.

No. 102, in page 13, line 20, at end insert 'or from its exclusion'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 19

EXPERT REPORTS

Amendment made: No. 103, in page 14, line 38, *[Clause 19]*, at end insert—

'(2A) For the purpose of determining whether to give leave, the court shall have regard to all the circumstances and in particular—

(a) to the contents of the report;

(b) to the reasons why it is proposed that the person making the report shall not give oral evidence; and

(c) to any likelihood of unfairness to the accused or, if there is more than one, any of them, resulting from the admission of the report if the person making it does not attend to give oral evidence, or from its exclusion.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 21

EVIDENCE THROUGH VIDEO LINKS

Amendment No. 104, in page 15, line 23, at end insert——

'(3A) A statement made on oath by a witness outside the United Kingdom and given in evidence through a live vieo link by virture of this section shall be treated for the purposes of section 1 of the Perjury Act 1911 as having been made in the proceedings in which it is given as evidence.

(3B) Without prejudice to its generality, any power to make Crown Court Rules or Criminal Appeal Rules shall include power to make such provision as appears to the authority exercising the power to be necessary or expendient for the purposes of subsection (3A) above.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 27

POWER OF CROWN COURT TO DEAL WITH SUMMARY OFFENCE WHERE PERSON COMMITTED FOR EITHER WAY OFFENCE

Amendments made: No. 58, in page 18, line 17, after 'of', insert 'such'.

No. 59, in page 18, line 20, after second 'of', insert 'such'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 29

REFERENCE OF SENTENCING QUESTIONS TO COURT OF APPEAL

Amendment made: No. 62, in page 19, line 21, at end insert—

'(A) Subject to rules of court made under section 53(1) of the Supreme Court Act 1981 the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal under this section shall be exercised by the criminal division of the court; and references in this section to the Court of Appeal shall be construed as references to that division.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 40

PROCEDURE FOR ISSUE OF CERTAIN WARRANTS OF COMMITMENT IN ABSENCE OF OFFENDER

Amendments made: No. 154, in page 23, leave out line 11 and insert 'In subsection (4)'.

No. 155, in page 23, line 12, leave out

'(warrants of commitment' and insert '(restriction on power to impose imprisonment'.

No. 156, in page 23, line 13, at end insert

'in paragraph (b)(ii) of subsection (4), for the words "all other methods of enforcing payment of the sum" there shall be substituted the words "the methods of enforcing payment of the sum specified in subsection (4A) below".

(1A) The following subsection shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(4A) The methods of enforcing payment mentioned in subsection (4)*(b)*(ii) are—

(a) a warrant of distress under section 76 above;

(b) an application to the High Court or county court for enforcement under section 87 below;

(c) an order under section 88 below;

(d) an attachment of earnings order; and

(e) if the offender is under the age of 21, an order under section 17 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982 (attendance centre orders).".

(2) The following subsections shall be inserted after subsection (5) of that section—.'.

No. 149, in page 23, line 20, leave out from beginning to 'it' in line 21 and insert—

'(5B) At such a hearing the court shall consider such information about the offenders means as is available to it, unless'.

No. 150, in page 23, line 27, leave out from 'time' to first 'and' in line 28.

No. 151, in page 23, line 33, at end insert—

'(5CA) Except as mentioned in subsection (5CB) below, the time stated in a notice under subsection (5A) above shall not be earlier than 21 days after the issue of the notice.

(5CB) Where a magistrates' court issues a notice under subsection (5A) above at the same time at exercising the power conferred by section 77(2) above, the time stated in the notice may be any day following the end of the period for which the issue of the warrant of commitment has been postponed.'.

No. 152, in page 24, line 2 leave out "at a hearing under section 82(5) above" and insert 'from "at" to "conviction"'.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

No. 153, in page 24, line 4, at end insert

'if the court thinks it just to do so having regard to any change in his circumstances since the conviction, remit the whole or any part of the fine or vary any condition on which the issue of the warrant of commitment relating to it was postponed under section 77 above.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 42

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

Amendments made:

No. 63, in page 24 line 48, leave out from 'police' to end of line 49.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 51

CASES IN WHICH RESTRAINT ORDERS AND CHARGING ORDERS MAY BE MADE.

Amendment made:

No. 64, in page 32, line 46, leave out subsection (5). —*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 77

THE COMPENSATION SCHEME

Amendments made: No. 127, in page 50, line 48, after 'constituting' insert '(i)'.

No. 128, in page 50, line 48, at end insert

'or

(ii) an offence specified in subsection (3A) below; or'.

No. 129, in page 51, line 8, after '(2)', insert '*(a)*(i)'.

No. 130, in page 51, line 8, leave out from 'any' to 'requiring' in line 10 and insert 'offence—

(a)'.

No. 131, in page 51, line 14, at end insert

'or

(b) whose commission requires the death of or personal injury to any individual where the state of mind of the person committing the offence consisted of recklessness as to whether he caused death or personal injury.

(3A) The offences mentioned in subsection (2)*(a)*(ii) above are—'.

No. 132, in page 51, line 14, at end insert—

'*(a)* rape;

(aa) an offence which falls to be charged as arson;'.

No. 133, in page 51, line 17, after 'disorder)', insert 'or 3 (affray)'.

No. 158, in page 52, line 21, leave out

'Subject to subsection (10) below,'.

No. 65, in line 23, after 'sustained', insert—

(a) is not a child; and

(b) '.

No. 125, in line 26, at end insert—

'*(a)* the Board are satisfied in relation to the person responsible for causing the injury or, where more than one person is responsible for causing it, each of the persons responsible who was living in the same household as the person injured when the injury was sustained—

(i) that he has been prosecuted in connection with the injury; or

(ii) that there is a sifficient reason why he has not been so prosecuted; and

(b) the Board are satisfied—

(i) that the person injured has ceased to live, and does not intend to live again, in the same household as the person responsible for causing the injury or, where more than one person is responsible for causing it, any of the persons responsible who was living in the same household as the person injured when the injury was sustained; or

(ii) if the person injured has not so ceased to live, that he is prevented by circumstances from doing so.'

No. 126, in line 27, leave out subsection (10).

No. 134, in line 39, leave out

'consisting of the impairment of any person's mental condition'.

No. 135, in line 41, leave out 'that person' and insert 'the person who sustained it'.

No. 136, in line 42, leave out 'the injury' and insert 'it'.

No. 137, in line 46, at end insert—

'(12) Where any criminal injury caused by shock consists of harm to a person's mental condition, it shall only be a qualifying injury for the purposes of the Part of this Act if it ammounts to a psychiatric illness.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 79

POWERS TO WITHHOLD AND REDUCE COMPENSATION

Amendment made: No. 66, in page 53, line 49, at end insert—

'(4) Where an injury which is a criminal injury by virtue of section 77(2)*(a)* above is sustained by a person who, when the injury is sustained—

(a) is a child; and

(b) is living in the same household as the person or, if more than one, any of the persons, responsible for causing it,

the Board shall consider whether, in all the circumstances, it is in the child's interest to make an award of compensation to him and shall not make an award unless they are satisfied that it is in his interest.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 80

RIGHT OF APPEAL BY WAY OF CASE STATED

Amendment made: No. 139, in page 54, line 6, leave out 'twenty-one' and insert 'twenty-eight'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 81

SMALL AWARDS AND AWARDS TO MINORS

Amendment made: No. 67, in page 54, line 30, leave out subsection (3).—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 82

REIMBURSEMENT AND RECOVERY

Amendment made: No. 142, in page 55, line 8, after 'him', insert

'or receives any such payment after the making of the award'. —*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 83

REIMBURSEMENT AND RECOVERY IN SCOTLAND

Amendments made: No. 159, in page 55, line 29, leave out '*(a)*'.

No. 160, in line 29, leave out from 'heard' to end of line 30 and insert—

'(2A) In considering whether to make an order under subsection (1) above, the sheriff shall have regard to the financial position of the offender and to such other matters (not including the question whether he was properly convicted) as the sheriff considers relevant.'.

No. 161, in line 31, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) The Board shall only make an application for an order under subsection (1) above if they have reason to believe that the offender is able to pay the whole or a substantial part of the award.

(3A) Subsections (5) and (6) of section 82 of this Act shall have effect in relation to Scotland.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 85

PART VI—INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 68, in page 56, line 7, at end insert

"child" means a person under the age of 18 years;'.

No. 138, in line 16, leave out 'impairment of' and insert 'harm to'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 94

ORDERS IN COUNCIL AS TO ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXTRADITION BETWEEN UNITED KINGDOM AND FOREIGN STATES

Amendment made: No. 115, in page 59, line 40, at end insert—

'(5) An Order in Council under this section which does not provide that a person may only be returned to the foreign state requesting his return if the court before which he is brought under section 98 below is satisfied that the evidence would be sufficient to warrant his trial if the extradition crime had taken place within the jurisdiction of the court shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 95

EXTRADITION REQUEST AND AUTHORITY TO PROCEED

Amendments made: No. 116, in page 60, line 27, leave out 'any offence' and insert

'an offence other than an offence excluded by subsection (4A) below, which is'.

No. 117, in line 29, at beginning insert

'subject to subsection (4B) below,'.

No. 118, in line 30, at end insert—

'(4a) The offences excluded from paragraph *(b)* of subsection (4) above are offences in relation to which an order for the return of the person concerned could not lawfully be made in accordance with the provisions of this part of this Act.

(4B) the Secretary of State may not give consent under paragraph *(c)* of that subsection in respect of an offence in relation to which it appears to him that an order for the return of the person concerned could not lawfully be made, or would not in fact be made, in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Act.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 98

PROCEEDINGS FOR COMMITTAL

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): I beg to move amendment No. 69, in page 62, line 12, leave out 'the foreign state' and insert

'*(a)* the United States of America or *(b)* any state which is a party to the European Convention on Extradition'.

The effect of this amendment is to restrict the abolition of the prima facie rule for extradition to requests from western Europe and the United States. I have been concerned about the abolition of the prima facie rule under this piece of legislation. It is a large step to take and it could have a great impact on human rights. I am not sure that it is entirely justified.

The prima facie rule consists of two parts. One is the rule which is the evidence of the crime, and the second is the rule by which the evidence is introduced, and I am not convinced that the evidence rule, which we are abolishing, is to blame for the present state of affairs; I think it is more to do with the rules of evidence.

It is a grave step to grant a request for extradition on a lower standard of proof than that required for committal in this country. So it is vital for us to have confidence in the country that is requesting extradition.

I recognise the Home Secretary's enthusiasm to try to combat international terrorism and I appreciate that we must improve the extradition climate. The Minister knows my views about this. We have discussed the matter in the past and in a letter he wrote to me on 1 August 1986 he intimated that, in effect, this legislation would not be used in countries other than those in western Europe and the United States.

The only purpose of this amendment is formally to put this on the record rather than to leave it lying around in correspondence with Back Benchers.

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend has perfectly properly raised this matter and it is certainly our intention to enter into arrangements whereby only the prima facie requirement would be dispensed with in respect of countries which share our standards of justice. In the main that would be Western European countries and the United States. We do not, on the face of the statute, rule out there being other countries outside that grouping with which we might wish to enter into those arrangements. It is quite right, though, that there needs to be a safeguard. The safeguard, I hope my hon. Friend might agree, is provided by Government amendment No. 115, which will be approved this evening, which gives the House the power to veto a non-prima facie treaty by means of annulment of the Order in Council embodying its terms. That would be the basis that any objections could be raised and aired publicly in the House if it were left that we were overstepping the mark in designating a country which was not appropriate for the abolition of the rule.

I hope that on that basis my hon. Friend might withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Ottaway: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that reply. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 108

PERSONS RETURNED TO UNITED KINGDOM BY FOREIGN STATE NOT TRIABLE FOR PREVIOUS OFFENCE

Amendment made: No. 119, in page 67, line 20, at end insert—

'*(aa)* any offence disclosed by the facts on which his return to the United Kingdom is granted, or'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 113

APPLICATION TO SERVICE COURTS ETC. OF PROVISIONS RELATING TO EVIDENCE

Amendments made: No. 106, in page 69, line 6, after 'or";', insert—

'*(aa)* with the substitution in subsection (3B), for the words "Crown Court Rules"—

(i) in relation to courts-martial, of the words "Rules of Procedure"; and

[Mr. Ottaway]

(ii) in relation to the Courts-Martial Appeal Court, the words "rules under section 49 of the Courts-Martial Appeals Act 1968.", and

(iii) in relation to Standing Civilian Courts, of the words "an order under paragraph 12 of Schedule 3 to the Armed Forces Act 1976.".'.

No. 105, in line 6, leave out 'and'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 117

REMANDS OF SUSPECTED DRUG OFFENDERS TO CUSTOMS DETENTION

Amendments made: No. 70, in page 71, line 3, at end insert

'"child" means a person under the age of 14;'.

No. 71, in page 71, leave out lines 4 and 5.

No. 72, in page 71, line 7, at end insert

'and "young person" means a person who has attained the age of 14 and is under the age of 17.'.

No. 73, in line 7, at end insert—

'(5) In the application of this section to Northern Ireland—

(a) for the words from the beginning of subsection (1) above to "1976" there shall be substituted the words "subject to subsection (3) below,";

(b) the reference in section 1 to the Criminal Law Act 1977 in subsection (2)*(c)* above shall be construed as a reference to Article 9 of the Criminal Attempts and Conspiracy (Northern Ireland) Order 1983; and

(c) the reference in subsection (2)*(d)* above to section 1 of the Criminal Attempts Act 1981 shall be construed as a reference to Article 3 of that Order.'.

—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 119

GROUNDLESS APPEALS

Amendment made: No. 74, in page 71, line 16, leave out from 'registrar' to 'that' in line 17.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 120

ANONYMITY IN RAPE ETC. CASES

Amendments made: No. 75, in page 71, line 29, leave out first 'subsection' and insert 'subsections'.

No. 76, in line 36, leave out 'photograph' and insert 'still or moving picture'.

No. 77, in page 72, line 5, at end insert—

'(1A) In subsection (1) above "picture" includes a likeness however produced.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 125

NORTHERN IRELAND

Amendments made: No. 78, in page 73, line 23, leave out

'section 30 or 31 above'

and insert

'any provision of this Act to which this section applies'.

No. 79, in line 28, at end insert—

'(2) The provisions of this Act to which this section applies are—

sections 4 to 16;

section 17 (including Schedule 2);

sections 18 to 22;

section 30;

section 31.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 128

COMMENCEMENT

Amendment made: No. 80, in page 73, line 45, at end insert—

'(1A) An order under subsection (1) above may make such transitional provision as appears to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient in connection with any provision thereby brought into force other than a provision mentioned in subsection (2) below.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Clause 129

EXTENT

Amendments made: No. 81, in page 75, leave out line 21 and insert

'section 1 (including Schedule 1); and sections 2 and 3;'.

No. 108, in line 15, at end inset—

'(12A) In subsection (11) above "modifications" includes additions, omissions and amendments.'.

No. 82, in line 16, leave out subsection (13).—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 1

THE SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE

Amendments made: No. 83, in page 77, line 24, at end insert—

'(2) In this paragraph references to the Director of Public Prosecutions include references to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland.'.

No. 84, in line 25, after 'proceedings', insert 'in England and Wales'.

No. 85, in line 27, at end insert—

'(2) Where the Director has the conduct of any criminal proceedings in Northern Ireland, the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland shall not in relation to those proceedings be required to exercise any function under Article 5 of the Prosecution of Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 1972.'.

No. 86, in line 29, after '1', insert '(4)'.

No. 87, in line 31, after 'proceedings', insert 'in England and Wales'.

No. 88, in line 37, at end insert—

'(1A) Where the Director or any designated official gives notice that he has instituted, or is conducting, any criminal proceedings in Northern Ireland—

(a) to a resident magistrate or a justice of the peace in Northern Ireland;

(b) to a clerk of petty sessions in Northern Ireland,

the person to whom the notice is given shall—

(i) at the prescribed time and in the prescribed manner; or

(ii) in a particular case, at the time and in the manner directed by the Attorney General,

send him every recognizance, complaint, certificate, deposition, document and thing connected with those proceedings which that person is required by law to deliver to the appropriate officer of the Crown Court.'.

No. 89, in line 39, leave out 'sub-paragraph (1) above,' and insert 'this paragraph'.

No. 90, in page 77, line 43, leave out 'sub-paragraph (1) above,' and insert 'this paragraph'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 7

CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION

Amendments made: No. 91, in page 93, line 9, at end insert 'in respect of interest or'.

No. 140, in page 96, line 4, leave out

'the amount of that payment'

and insert

'so much (if any) of that payment as the Board are satisfied that the claimant has received before they make the award'.

No. 141, in page 96, line 5, leave out sub-paragraphs (2) and (3).—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 9

Amendments of Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965 and Fugitive Offenders Act 1967

Amendments made: No. 120, in page 104, line 28, leave out 'and'.

No. 121, in page 104, line 32, leave out 'any lesser offence' and insert

'a lesser offence, other than an offence excluded by subsection (3A) below, which is'.

No. 122, in page 104, line 33, at end insert

'and

(d) at the beginning of paragraph *(c)*, there shall be inserted the words "subject to subsection (3B) below,".'.

No. 123, in page 114, line 33, at end insert—

'(5) The following subsections shall be inserted after that subsection—

(3A) The offences excluded from paragraph *(b)* of subsection (3) above are offences in relation to which an order for the return of the person concerned could not lawfully be made.

(3B) The Secretary of State may not give consent under paragraph *(c)* of that subsection in respect of an offence in relation to which it appears to him that an order for the return of the person concerned could not lawfully be made, or would not in fact be made.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 12

Minor and Consequential Amendments

Amendments made: No. 109, in page 111, line 22, at end insert—

'18A. In section 30(1) of that Act (suspension of restitution orders pending appeal), the words "made on a conviction on indictment" shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 92, in page 111, line 26, at end insert—

'19A. At the end of subsection (1) of section 33 of that Act (right of appeal to House of Lords) there shall be added the words "or section 9 (preparatory hearings) of the Criminal Justice Act 1987".'.

No. 93, in page 112, line 10, at end insert—

'Prosecution of Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 (S.I., 1972, No. 538 (N.I.))

24A. In Article 5(3) of the Prosecution of Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 (which makes provision, amongst other things, for the functions of the Director of Public Prosecution in Northern Ireland in relation to the conduct of criminal proceedings) after the word "Director" there shall be inserted the words ", subject to any provision contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1987".'.

No. 110, in page 112, line 11, at end insert—

'24A. In subsection (1) of section 34A of the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973 (power of Crown Court to order search of persons before it)—

(a) in paragraph *(c)*, the words "other than an order under section 35 of this Act;" shall cease to have effect; and

(b) the following paragraph shall be inserted after that paragraph—

"*(cc)* the Crown Court makes an order against a person under section 35 of this Act;".'.

No. 111, in line 12, leave out

'the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973'

and insert 'that Act'.

No. 112, in line 26, leave out paragraph 26.

No. 94, in page 114, line 45, leave out paragraph 45.

No. 107, in line 49, at end insert—

'45A. In section 128(3A) of that Act (remand in custody without accused being brought before court) after the word "above" there shall be inserted the words "unless the case is one to which section 128A below applies,".—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Schedule 13

Repeals

Amendments made: No. 113, in page 122, line 24, at end insert—

	'In section 30, the words "made on a conviction on indictment".'.

No. 114, in line 34, at end insert—

	'In section 34A(1)(c), the words "other than an order under section 35 of this Act".'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Title

Amendment made: No. 95, in line 9, after 'cases' insert 'the alteration of names of petty sessions areas.'.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned.—[Mr. Garel-Jones.]

Bill, as amended in the Standing Committee, to be further considered this day.

Sixth Form Education (Derbyshire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.53 am

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I am exceedingly grateful for getting this Adjournment debate. I must admit that, having learned today that the last time an Adjournment took place at this time was 3 February, I do not know whether to feel honoured or somewhat sorry for the people in my constituency who stay up late listening to "Today in Parliament" to try to catch what is happening in this Chamber and to hear the debate which we are about to have.

I should like to draw the attention of the House and of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to the plans of Derbyshire county council to reorganise secondary education in the Derby area. However, tonight I shall be making my main points in relation to Ecclesbourne comprehensive school, which is in my constituency.

I wish to pay a particular tribute to the work that has been done by the action committee in the school, led by Mrs. Pauline Latham, who has put a lot of work and effort into putting the case over both to me and to the county council.

It is almost a year since my election. In my maiden speech, I made reference to the excellent schools in my constituency. I talked also about the threat to the sixth form at Ecclesbourne school. Unfortunately, that threat has now become a reality and the county council is proposing to close the sixth form, a sixth form which I shall show is of proven worth.

It is of proven worth not because the headmaster says so and not because the teachers say so. It is of proven worth because the parents and pupils say so.

It is true that post-16 education in Derbyshire is fairly poor, but that is certainly not the case, nor is it true, for Ecclesbourne school, where 55 per cent. of the fifth form stay on to go into the sixth form, whereas the average for Derby schools is usually only 18 per cent. The percentages of pupils in that school obtaining the higher grades in O-level subjects—that is, grades A, B, and C—were: in English language, in 1986, 97, and in English literature, 80. The number of pupils enrolled in that school in September was 181. I believe that those are figures of which any school could and should be proud.

The figures to which I have just referred show why the parents want the school to continue and give it so much support. If one was driving through the area of Duffield in my constituency before the county council ripped all the posters down for which it seemed to find money available, one would have seen posters putting the case for saving Ecclesbourne school. If one was to walk in that village now one would see people wearing "Save Ecclesbourne" badges because it has become an issue of local concern and local campaigning.

Part of the authority's case is that falling school rolls require the removal of surplus places. That is true for Derby in general, but it is certainly not true for Ecclesbourne, where numbers are stable. Indeed, in 1977 the headmaster was asked to estimate what the school roll would be over the next 10 years. His estimate was that the number in the school in 1986 would be 1,205. The local education authority's estimate was 893. The number on the roll in 1986 was 1,204. Therefore, the headmaster, nine years before, was one out in his prediction. That shows that the parents are certainly happy with the school.

The authority also argues that sixth forms are not viable. On the authority's own figures, the sixth form is viable at Ecclesbourne for as long as predictions can be made. The authority tries also to suggest that tertiary colleges are somehow better than sixth forms. I have found no evidence for that claim. I believe that it is a false argument because the choice is between sixth forms and tertiary education and not between sixth forms or tertiary education. That choice is removed.

The parents in my constituency rightly object to tertiary colleges being forced upon them and changing a system that has proven results for a system that might be better. I do not believe that we should go from a system that is proven to a system that is unproven. That is a wild jump in the dark and we should not put our children at risk.

As I have said, Ecclesbourne is a school of proven worth. In its curriculum breadth, the school offers A-levels in 18 subjects and could offer more if there were a demand. It also provides 11 one-year courses for sixth formers, spanning the academic to the pre-vocational.

Ecclesbourne has a concern for low achievers and, on average, improvements over a 24-month period in reading ages of the first years needing help with basic skills. I offer the following quotation from a father's letter to the headmaster. It was quoted by the headmaster in his 1985 speech day report. It is a good endorsement of the school. The father wrote:

> "He came to Ecclesbourne School seven years ago with a number of educational problems which resulted in a person with really no self-confidence and poor prospects. Indeed, his Primary teacher in her final assessment confessed him to be 'a mess'. Now, as you may be aware, educationally he is in possession of 8 'O' levels and 3 'A' levels and he has embarked this term on a Further Education course. But even more importantly, he is now a happy, self-confident, well-adjusted person, knowing where he wants to go."

What more can we ask of our schools?

There can be no doubt about the importance of a sixth form in a school and the school boasts the widest possible range of extra-curricular activities in which the sixth form plays a major role in organising.

There is a case for choice. Sixth forms are different from tertiaries. Sixth forms have high expectations in performance and behaviour. They make demands as well as offering choices. I believe also that sixth forms are a powerful and beneficial influence on the rest of the school. There is no doubt that they attract better teachers. Sixth forms provide examples for younger pupils who also want to benefit from their activities as organisers.

Ecclesbourne's sixth form offers a valuable alternative to a tertiary college. Its students are set demanding yet realistic personal targets. Their progress and development are carefully monitored. The curriculum is carefully matched to the needs of their locality. It cannot even be claimed by the county council to be a financially viable alternative, as the local education authority admits that it will cost an additional £2·35 million to accommodate the extra pupils from Ecclesbourne and another school, John Port. The annual operating costs will also increase by £650,000, and no details are given of changeover or disruption costs.

Mr. Richard Ryder (Mid-Norfolk): Where are the Opposition?

Mr. McLoughlin: Unfortunately, they are in control of Derbyshire county council, and that is our problem. Bearing in mind the answer which my hon. Friend, through the Secretary of State, gave to my question, he will know that out of Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire is the highest rated county.

Mr. David Lightbown (Staffordshire, South-East): Get rid of Bookbinder.

Mr. McLoughlin: One thing on which it spends less per head than those other authorities is education, and I would like to see its education spending brought into line with that of other counties. I would rather see the money spent on education that on some of the other crazy schemes that the county council suggests. I want to see the money used in a positive way, improving opportunities for children in schools, not destroying them which is what the county council seems so intent on doing.

For every child in primary school in Derbyshire £780 is spent, while in Nottinghamshire it is £840, For every child in secondary school in Derbyshire £1,125 is spent, while in Nottinghamshire it is £1,220. But one does not improve educational opportunities by destroying what is good and proven.

The last area to which I wish to turn my attention is that of the governing body. This is a short debate and I know that some of my hon. Friends would like to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have given me unswerving support in this campaign, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight). I have said that my first speech in the House was on the Education Bill. I was extremely pleased to be appointed to that Standing Committee. As my hon. Friend will know, it changed the way in which governing bodies are appointed.

At the moment, the governing body of Ecclesbourne school has failed to give its total support to the campaign to save the school. Of the present governing body, 12 members are appointed by Derbyshire county council, two by Amber Valley district council and one by Derby city council. Seven are elected and 15 appointed by the county and district councils. One of the members said at a public meeting which I attended that although he would not like to see the sixth form closed it seemed that "we"—the governing body—"should support the council." After all, he said,

"they are socialists and we are socialists."

I honestly believed that the duty of a governing body was to represent the best interests of the school, and certainly not the best interests of the local education authority. I am exceptionally glad that we have changed the law to ensure that we remove such politically biased people so that they no longer have a majority on school governing bodies. That legislation cannot come into effect in Derbyshire fast enough for the good of our schools.

The present governing body at Ecclesbourne obviously does not speak for the school that it is supposed to represent but rather its comrades in arms at county hall. This is a disgusting approach for a governing body to take, and one which should be condemned by the Labour Front Bench. Unfortunately, none of them is here. I very much doubt whether they will condemn it; indeed, they cannot condemn it this evening. The parents have only one hope of ensuring that these proposals are stopped. It is a hope to which this Government should be able to respond with ease because not only does the school provide good education but the parents are happy and satisfied with it and it is large enough to contain its own sixth form.

Sixth forms play a valuable role and I am reluctant to see them replaced by impersonal tertiary colleges. The tertiary college system should be the last resort of any local education authority. Before tertiary education goes ahead, the education authority should have considered carefully the arrangements for consortium education so that the sixth form pupil remains at the school at which he has spent his whole school life and is not removed to a big, impersonal tertiary college at the end of his school days. We should look to tertiary colleges as a last resort and not try to jump for them as a first resort, as Derbyshire county council is doing in the proposal currently before the Secretary of State.

The parents can only look to this Government and to the Secretary of State as a believer in the individual and as a believer in parental choice, not Socialist dogma, to overturn the decision and reject the case for tertiary education for Ecclesbourne school. There can be no doubt about the commitment of my constituents to that school, as anyone who has been around this place today will know, having listened to the short speeches of hon. Members in other debates.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will not be able to answer one way or the other tonight. As the Member for the constituency I have placed on record a very strong concern on the subject. As Adjournment debates are not the easiest to answer, it would be wrong of me not to express to my hon. Friend my grateful thanks for his decision last week on a primary school in my constituency. When he informs me of the decision on the sixth form proposals of Derbyshire county council, I can only ask that his letter reads like the letter that he sent me last week when he said that the Secretary of State, under the powers vested in him, rejected the proposal of Derbyshire county council. It is only a Conservative Government that can reject such proposals; I trust that it will be a Conservative Government who do reject it.

3.4 am

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on bringing to the attention of the House an extremely important matter. I support him unreservedly. May I say in passing that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who unfortunately cannot be here, is also concerned about several aspects of Derbyshire county council's proposals for education within the county? She wishes to be associated with my hon. Friend's remarks.

This is an extremely important matter to anyone who has ties with the county of Derbyshire. We are entitled to ask why there is not one single member of the Labour party present for the debate. Why has not one member of the alliance bothered to stay to listen to my hon. Friend? That is a disgrace, and the matter should not go unobserved by the House. It will not go unobserved by the people of Derbyshire.

My hon. Friend properly concentrated on the position at Ecclesbourne school, but many other schools in Derbyshire will be affected by the county council's proposals. I accept immediately that some sixth forms need to close because of falling rolls. For example, there

[Mr. Greg Knight]

is no case for keeping open the sixth forms at Littleover school and Parkfields school, in my view, because of falling rolls there.

However, in addition to supporting my hon. Friend's comments on Ecclesbourne school I want to tell the Minister that other schools in Derbyshire have viable sixth forms of proven worth and should not be closed. I mention, en passant, Spondon school and Woodlands school, both in my constituency. If a sixth form is viable, surely it should be kept open so that parents and pupils have the right to choose.

I find amazing not only the absence of Opposition Members but also the astonishing silence of some of those from Derbyshire whom one would have expected to support the views of the parents and pupils. I am referring to local councillors and local-authority-appointed school governors. Why have we in Derbyshire not heard from them? Why have they kept quiet on this issue?

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene briefly in his debate. I am not saying that every aspect of the Derbyshire plan is wrong, but I am saying that the proposals for Ecclesbourne, Spondon and Woodlands schools—are wrong. The plan is destructive and it should be rejected.

3.11 am

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I support the retention of the sixth form at Ecclesbourne school. Ecclesbourne school is not in my constituency, but it is on its border and several parents who live in Amber Valley send their children to Ecclesbourne school.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) for allowing me to take part in the debate. As the hour is late, or early, depending which way one looks at it, I do not propose to speak for long, especially as most of the relevant points have been ably made by my hon. Friend, whom I fully and wholeheartedly support in his campaign for the retention of the sixth form at Ecclesbourne.

I want briefly to pay tribute to the action group, ably led by Pauline Latham and ably backed by many concerned parents. The most worrying aspect of the county council's proposal to close Ecclesbourne's sixth form is the way in which Derbyshire county council is blatantly and shamefacedly politicising education. I say that it is politicising education because the only reason for proposing to close the sixth form at Ecclesbourne is a political one.

There simply is no educational reason for closing the sixth form in Ecclesbourne. It is a good sixth form. There is no financial reason for closing the sixth form, because it would be cheaper to retain it. There is no democratic reason for closing it, because the parents and the people in the area are almost unanimously in favour of its retention.

The truth is that this is a blatantly political decision by the county council which wants to close the sixth form because it thinks that it would be elitist to keep it open. "Elitism" is the word which the county council bandies around to cover anything which it happens not to like.

How can it be elitist for a sixth form as good as Ecclesbourne to survive? Surely it is just the opposite, because it is good sixth forms such as the Ecclesbourne school sixth form which give children who do not necessarily have a privileged background an opportunity to succeed in our society.

Derbyshire county council's proposals to close Ecclesbourne's sixth form are undemocratic, in that they take no account of the wishes of local parents. They are bad for education, financially idiotic and understandable only in the context of the type of manic Socialist dogma into which Derbyshire county council—unfortunately—so often delves.

3.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on his success in obtaining an Adjournment debate on the proposals of Derbyshire county council to reorganise sixth form education. I also place on record the congratulations of Conservative Members on the way in which my hon. Friend has conducted himself and represented the interests of his constituents since his election.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising an issue that is of immediate concern to him, and to other hon. Members who represent Derbyshire. They have spoken about the proposals of Derbyshire county council to reorganise sixth form education in the county by providing 16-plus education at tertiary colleges, and to close sixth forms in secondary schools. Those proposals have already been published in the city of Derby and its surrounding area.

My hon. Friends will appreciate that it is impossible for me to prejudge the issues, and that I am therefore unable to say anything about the future of the sixth forms that are the subject of our debate. I can, however, assure them that I have listened carefully to what has been said tonight, and that the points that they have made will be taken into account along with the representations that we have received, and any others that we may receive, before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State makes his decision on the proposals.

Finally, I must state, without prejudice to this or any future case, that the Government are determined to preserve quality in education wherever and whenever it is found, and to work for its continued improvement. As my hon. Friends know, I have made that point on numerous occasions but I gladly make it again tonight, and hope that I shall do so many times in the future.

I thank my hon. Friends who have spoken so well. We will listen carefully to what they have to say, and I shall ensure that all the views that have been expressed come to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Three o'clock am.

House of Commons

Wednesday 1 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answer to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

European Year of the Environment

1. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initiatives his Department is taking to contribute to the European Year of the Environment.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning (Mr. William Waldegrave): My Department intends to provide more than £750,000 in direct support of the United Kingdom's National Committee and of projects within its programme for European Year of the Environment. We are also sponsoring a number of specific projects.

Mr. Jones: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, in addition to the various initiatives in which he is involved, industry in the United Kingdom has set a lead in producing much of the new technology that will help to abate pollution? Does his Department intend to support in any way the fair that is due to take place next month in Birmingham, which will show British technology at its best?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, Sir. We had a lot to do with the generation of the idea of the international pollution abatement technology fair at the national exhibition centre in Birmingham, which starts on Monday. It is important to remind people that valuable jobs are to be found in providing modern equipment for pollution abatement for home use and export.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister comment on the work of the national committee in promoting the European Year of the Environment, and in particular the efforts of the officers who have been responsible for drawing-up the programme?

Mr. Waldegrave: I should like to pay tribute to those, including the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who have done sterling work on the committee under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Harrop. The committee is finding the job enjoyable, in that many good projects are coming forward. I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the staff, who will now be in place with a proper budget to deal with.

Mr. Coombs: Will my hon. Friend tell the House what progress is being made in the European Community, particularly by the United Kingdom, towards reducing levels of acid rain?

Mr. Waldegrave: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced last year, we are committed to a £600 million programme of flue gas desulphurisation to ensure that the declining trend of our sulphur emissions continues, as we need it to do.

Mr. Livsey: As to European Environment Year, will the Minister indicate what occurred at the meeting of European Environment Ministers with regard to the protection of the ozone layer?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is the case, at least in theory, that Council meetings are confidential, but it is no secret that the Community agreed a negotiating position to take to the Vienna meetings, where the protocol will finally be agreed, which will involve a freeze followed by cuts in the production of chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Jessel: As part of the European Year of the Environment, will my hon. Friend encourage bee keeping? If so, will his Department drop the proposal that is contained in the consultation document to classify bees as pests?

Mr. Waldegrave: There has been a certain amount of unnecessary alarm about this matter because, by a failure, for which I apologise, I did not send the relevant consultation paper about air pollution to the bee keeping associations. Bees are ecologically and economically important, but in urban areas uncontrolled swarms can occasionally cause problems to householders. We were discussing whether additional powers were needed to deal with that.

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister note that this is the European Year of the Environment, and will he send a message of goodwill to our European neighbours by announcing that the British Government will join them in signing the 30 per cent. declaration on acidic emissions? Will he announce the phasing out of the dumping of sewage sludge in the North sea, and will he give the House an assurance that the Government will not block the directive on large-scale plants for acidic emission, which is due to come up at the May Council meeting, and thereby do something to improve Britain's bad name in European environmental circles?

Mr. Waldegrave: Britain's name is not so bad as the hon. Gentleman appears to hope it is. To start at the end, it is not Britain but Spain that is now blocking the large plant directive. Secondly, I would be happy to end any particular dumping if it were shown to be environmentally correct to do so. Scientific studies show that for some treated sewage sludge dumping at sea may be the best practical environmental option, and we must not abandon that concept. On the hon. Gentleman's third point, we have explained again and again that the starting date of 1980 for the 30 per cent. club is systematically unfair to Britain. That has been recognised in the negotiations in Europe on the large plant directive, incidentally, but it has not been recognised yet in the protocol itself.

Housing Needs Expenditure

2. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to allow local authorities to spend more than 20 per cent. of their capital receipts from council house sales on housing needs; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I have no immediate plans to alter the rule whereby local authorities can spend the whole of their receipts from council house sales, provided they do not use more than 20 per cent. of them a year for prescribed expenditure.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Would it not be a splendid idea with the coincidence of this question with National Housing Week to double the limit for prescribed expenditure to 40 per cent. to give a real initiative to housing authorities? Secondly, would it not be important to build on the consensus on the need to involve housing associations, building societies and other financial organisations to put together a committee that again could build on the consensus and enable us to solve the housing problem by using all the financial resources that are available, which are obviously considerable?

Mr. Ridley: The Labour party and the Conservative party—the Government—both agree that there should be overall control of local authority capital expenditure. The Liberal party, and the Social Democratic party—the alliance—have not made clear to me what their view on that is. If that is the case, an increase in the prescribed proportion of receipts would result in a reduction in capital allocations. That would be unproductive. It would make life harder for housing authorities in deprived areas in inner cities. Although the hon. Gentleman does not really care about the details, it would probably make life harder for Leeds than will leaving the percentage as it is.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, given the improvements in the economy since this policy was introduced, for which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer rightly took credit last month when introducing the Budget, it is increasingly difficult to defend or understand the 20 per cent. limitation? Is it not high time that it was revised upwards to at least 30 per cent.?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure my hon. Friend realises that what matters is gross provision. That has increased from £2,669 million last year to £2,922 million in 1987-88, a big increase. As for dividing the gross provision between allocations and the use of capital receipts, the issue is whether the resources go to the more deprived areas or to the less deprived areas. I think the House will feel generally that the right way to help deprived areas is to make available to them the bulk of the capital allocations, rather than to increase receipts.

Mr. Janner: In view of the supplementary question asked by the hon. Member for Melton (Mr. Latham), surely there can be no justification for preventing local authorities from spending 80 per cent. of their own money, which they have been forced by the Government to accumulate, when there is desperate need in areas such as Leicester for improvements, repairs and maintenance, and when the council has had 50 per cent. of its funds taken from it by central Government.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. and learned Gentleman may not understand the system. Allowing an increased proportion of receipts to be spent means that local authorities go out and borrow more. Local authorities are indebted in total to the extent of over £30 billion, and any increase in spending will lead to an increase in debt. The Government do not mind a bit whether spending takes the form of so-called capital receipts or of increased allocations. The point is to determine the best way of helping authorities in need. Is it receipts, or allocations? I would have thought that the hon. and learned Gentleman would look to the interests of his constituents and realise that allocations will be of more use to them.

Mr. Madel: Where a council has a good record on selling council houses and has been sensible about its spending and its rates, will my right hon. Friend let such councils make individual representations to him to allow the 20 per cent. to be exceeded if that council has a number of derelict homes that urgently need repair?

Mr. Ridley: I would dearly like to have the sort of slush fund suggested by my hon. Friend, but I fear that that would be the wrong way to proceed. I must repeat that, if the House wants more money to be allocated to the major areas of housing stress and housing repair problems, the right way to do so is to reduce the prescribed proportion and increase allocations. However, I am not proposing any change.

Dr. Cunningham: In view of the obvious anger, if not dismay, felt on all sides of the House, will the Secretary of State reconsider Government policy on local authority capital receipts? Is he not aware that many Conservative as well as Labour authorities regard this policy as unnecessarily restrictive, especially since their money is involved? Will he contact the Conservative councillor to whom I spoke in Coventry yesterday when I opened a sheltered dwelling scheme—Quniton Lodge—who said, "We would like to build many more of these schemes and we have the money to do so, but the Government will not let us spend it". That is the case in many authorities around the country—Labour and Conservative alike—which need only one word from the Minister—yes—to allow them to spend their money to provide houses, especially for elderly and disabled people. How can it be right to have a fiscal adjustment of £6 billion in the Budget and to continue with this stupid control?

Mr. Ridley: I read, even though the hon. Gentleman may not have done so, the Labour party's policy for local government finance. He made it absolutely clear that the Labour party believes in controlling the total capital expenditure of local authorities. Do we agree?

Mr. Straw: Capital borrowing.

Mr. Ridley: It is the same point.

If we are agreed that there should be control of borrowing, is the Labour party saying that it would like to increase the prescribed proportion and reduce the amount that goes on allocations within a controlled total? That is the question that the Labour party must answer. If the Labour party answers it in the way suggested by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), it will deprive the hon. Gentleman's constituency of the help that it needs.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: In the light of the representations made to my right hon. Friend by both sides of the House, but especially from the Conservative Benches, will my right hon. Friend give further consideration to the matter? Will he agree to meet a delegation of his hon. Friends, not least because those of us who represent responsible borough councils — my borough of Macclesfield is the lowest-rated borough in Cheshire — are aware that they need to spend their money to provide accommodation for the elderly and for

the young? Will he bear in mind that these authorities have obeyed every exhortation and request of the Conservative Government?

Mr. Ridley: I would be delighted to meet my hon. Friend and any group of councillors or hon. Friends that he may wish to bring with him. I would be — *[Interruption.]* If the House will listen, let me say that I would be sorely tempted to agree with him. However, if I were to do so the result would be that the most deprived areas of the country, including Leeds, Whitehaven, Workington and South Shields, would suffer because they would receive less in allocations because more would be going to my hon. Friend's constituency.

Fulham Football Club

3. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet the president of the Football League to discuss the future of Fulham football club; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I see the president of the Football League regularly, but I have no plans to discuss the future of Fulham football club specifically. I have no powers to interfere in decisions of the club's directors or with discussions they may have with the Football League.

Mr. Pendry: I am sad to hear that. Will the Minister recognise that his act of listing certain buildings at Craven Cottage, helpful as it was, will not stop the Bulstrodes of this world from demolishing our football clubs for commercial gain? When the Minister next meets the president, will he urge him to change the Football League's regulations so that no one may acquire a League club without guaranteeing that the club will not be used for other than football and sports-related activities without the management committee's approval?

Mr. Tracey: Obviously, the Football League's regulations are very much a matter for the League's management committee. I am sure that the House will agree with the hon. Gentleman about the protection of football clubs. However, the problem at Fulham football club, as with many other clubs, is that it has lost the support of the communities around it and the supporters who ought to be bringing in revenue to keep the club together.

Mr. Rayner: Will the Minister recognise that Fulham football club has generated more loyal support and determination to save it from the greedy hands of property speculating asset strippers than virtually any other sporting institution has demonstrated this year? Will he also recognise—this is critical—that the survival of football clubs depends on thir being run in the interests of football? Part of the problem with Fulham football club has been that its ownership in recent years has been vested in the hands of individuals who have been more concerned with what money they can make out of property development than out of the furtherance of the football club's fortunes.

Mr. Tracey: I am sure that Fulham football club will have found a large number of supporters in recent times. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman has become a vocal supporter, as was his predecessor, the late Mr. Martin Stevens. I am well aware that football as a game has increased considerably in popularity across the board in recent years. However, unfortunately, the clubs at top level have been losing supporters because they have lost the support of the communities around them.

Mr. Denis Howell: Is the Minister aware that we have rarely heard such a dismal reply to such an important question? When he meets the president of the Football League, will he explain that the football grounds are so attractive to speculators because they were all created, at the turn of the century, in the heartlands of our industrial populations? They need to be protected by regulations within football itself, and by suitable planning action by local authorities and the Government. Will he also consider with the president the fact that there is such a little return on investment in football at the moment that makes the capital sale of the grounds so attractive to the speculators? Action to maintain these oases of sport in the midst of our industrial conurbations will require of him initiatives which he has so far singularly failed to take.

Mr. Tracey: I have to remind the right hon. Gentleman that football clubs are private companies, and it is essential that private companies should be attractive to their supporters—the consumers. I have observed, from what the right hon. Gentleman said, far too many interventionist tendencies, which are only too typical of his party.

Private Sector Tenants

4. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in respect of security of tenure for private sector tenants.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): We get a steady flow of representations on this issue, requesting the reform of the private rented sector to bring empty flats and houses back into use in the interests of those who need homes.

Mr. Winnick: Why should any legislation that would remove security of tenure from incoming tenants in the private sector be any more successful than the totally discredited Rent Act 1957, which not only ensured a substantial reduction in the rented sector, but led to Rachmanism and to existing tenants having their security undermined? When will the millionaire Secretary of State recognise that the appalling housing crisis requires much more public sector and housing association accommodation, not opportunities for racketeering landlords to exploit tenants?

Mr. Patten: On the hon. Gentleman's second question, I do not think that cheap personal attacks on my right hon. Friend do the hon. Gentleman any good at all.

On the hon. Gentleman's first question, opinion about the private rented sector has changed greatly. I direct him to the excellent editorial of 24 March in that admirable morning newspaper, *The Guardian*. Now that my reselection has safely passed, I can mention that that editorial was rather in my praise. The editorial said that the private rented sector had a vital role to play in housing, and it was right.

Mr. Hoddle: Does my hon. Friend accept that the appalling housing crisis to which the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has just referred is entirely due to the dogmatic and static attitude of the Opposition

parties? The way to give the right to rent to millions of young families is to encourage building societies, institutions and other responsible bodies to provide that rented accommodation. Will my hon. Friend do everything possible at the earliest opportunity to introduce legislation to that effect?

Mr. Patten: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Rooker: May I remind the Minister that the question is about security of tenure? Does he appreciate the vulnerable position of the tenants of some private landlords? Landlords knock on the doors of their female tenants late at night, not coming for a cup of coffee, but seeking other favours. That happens throughout the country and, indeed, in my constituency. That vulnerability is due to lack of security of tenure, and that is why my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and others call for greater security of tenure in the private rented sector. The Minister must address himself to that point. Young people, and women in particular, are extremely vulnerable under the present rules.

Mr. Patten: I was slightly surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman's suggestion, because he has never written to inform me of any of those complaints. I repeat what I said on Second Reading of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill the Government have no intention of changing the security of tenure of present renting tenants.

Mr. Michael Brown: Does not the present legislation relating to rented accommodation mean that unemployed people who have access to work are often unable to accept the offer of employment? Will not legislative reform enable people to take jobs that they cannot take now because no private rented accommodation is available?

Mr. Patten: Only the attitude of some — I stress, some — Opposition Members is preventing us from reaching a position in which the law can be reformed in order to bring back into use some of the 540,000 empty privately owned flats and houses in the country. That would be in the interests of those seeking work, of young people who are moving to big cities and of the homeless.

Liverpool (Rate Support Grant)

5. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what rate support grant is to be received by Liverpool city council in 1986-87; and what the comparable figure was for 1981-82 and 1983-84, in constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Ridley: The figures in 1986-87 prices are £129·8 million for 1986-87, £154·1 million for 1981-82 and £141·1 million for 1983-84.

Mr. Wareing: Is that not further evidence, if it were required, of the Government's attack on the city of Liverpool? Is it not time to call off the vendetta against the people of Liverpool, in which the Government have been engaged over the past six or seven years? Does the Secretary of State not realise that it is not councillors with whom he has political differences who suffer, but the homeless, who require homes, the old and the disabled, who require social services, and the council tenants, whose houses require urgent repairs? Is it not time that there was an adequate rate support grant for one of the greatest cities in this country?

Mr. Ridley: I am surprised by that, because I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that Liverpool's share of rate support grant was 1·34 per cent. of the total in 1981-82, and last year it rose to 1·44 per cent. of the total, so Liverpool is in fact receiving a greater share of the rate support grant total.

Mr. Favell: Will my right hon. Friend remind the Opposition where rate support grant comes from? Does it emerge from the ground like daffodils in the spring or out of the sky like showers in April, or does it come from the taxpayer in villages, towns and cities throughout the country, most of which are run by councillors who are responsible, balance their budgets and show a great deal more consideration for their fellow taxpayers than do those in Liverpool, Manchester and many of the inner London boroughs?

Mr. Ridley: As my hon. Friend raises the point, let me tell him that in 1986-87 Stockport received £171 per head in rate support grant, whereas Liverpool — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly in order to compare the two.

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps I can give the figures that I intended to give. In 1986-87, Liverpool received £264 per head in rate support grant. Stockport received £171 per head. Next year, in 1987-88, at the settlement assumption, Liverpool will receive £264 per head and Stockport £173 per head. I sympathise with my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell). The problems of Stockport are every bit as severe as the problems of Liverpool. That illustrates the point that I made to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), that Liverpool is getting a very good share of the rate support grant — indeed, a much bigger share than Stockport, where, I think he will agree, there are some serious problems, too.

Mr. Alton: Is it not invidious to start drawing comparisons between different areas? Does the Secretary of State not accept that the rate support grant system is fundamentally flawed, because it does not take into account major demographic changes? One third of the city of Liverpool's population have left in the past 20 years, one in four people are over retirement age, and there is the fastest growing group in the over-80s, one in five are unemployed, and there is one of the largest voluntary sectors of education anywhere in the country. With those major demographic changes and special circumstances, should the right hon. Gentleman not look again at the way in which Liverpool's rate is settled? If the district auditor comes in, and if the Audit Commission carries out a survey that highlights areas where the Secretary of State should assist, will the right hon. Gentleman agree to follow those recommendations?

Mr. Ridley: It is precisely because of the factors that the hon. Gentleman mentioned that Liverpool's GRE gives it a higher rate support grant than that of many other authorities. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the additional factor of shrinking population. I receive strong representations from my hon. Friends who represent Berkshire to the effect that growing population is an equally severe problem for them. Every hon. Member has different views as to why his authority should have a greater share of the rate support grant, and those views are all reflected in the long, almost continuous negotiations on

GRE, which have resulted in Liverpool getting not 1·34 per cent. of the total but 1·44 per cent. of the total, a growing proportion, in recognition of those very problems.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Dickens. However, I remind the hon. Gentleman that this question is about Liverpool.

Mr. Dickens: Has the Secretary of State read the remarks by the former deputy leader of Liverpool council, who stated that the abolition of the Merseyside county council and bus deregulation had saved an enormous amount of money? Does my right hon. Friend believe that the Government are reaching those parts that the Opposition have failed to reach?

Mr. Ridley: I read that a sum of £10 million had been saved for Liverpool as a result of those two policies. Indeed, I have read that sums of great magnitude have been saved through the abolition of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan county councils and as a result of the Transport Act 1985. I am only waiting for the letters of thanks from the councils that opposed both those measures. I believe that due thanks are now in order here for to the very large sums that councils have been saved.

Mr. Heffer: May I remind the right hon. Gentleman of what two of his predecessors said about the problems on Merseyside and Liverpool? The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) came up with proposals to try to help the area, but they were cut back by the Cabinet of the day. Also, another of the Secretary of State's hon. Friends said when he came to Liverpool that he had never seen such problems in relation to housing anywhere in Europe. Is it not about time that the Secretary of State and his hon. Friend's recognised that the problems in Liverpool have arisen because of the decline of the port, which is no fault of the people of Liverpool? That has happened because we are on the wrong side of the country and because we entered the European Common Market. Is it not time——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not time that Conservative Members recognised the real problems of the city, the high level of unemployment, the great problems with housing and the other problems that go with that, and began at last to deal with those problems on a serious basis instead of producing the nonsense that we hear from the Conservative Benches——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Heffer: —to help the people in the area involved? It is precisely because——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman should try to apply for an adjournment debate on this subject. I know that this subject is of grave concern to the hon. Gentleman, but he is taking a long time. We have reached only Question 5.

Mr. Heffer: With due respect, Mr. Speaker, it is not a joke that my people in my part of the world are unemployed and suffering. It is about time that the Government began to look at the real problems instead of listening to the nonsense from the Tory Back Benches.

Mr. Ridley: It is a pity, when so much of what the hon. Gentleman says is justified — there are indeed real problems in Liverpool — that those problems were compounded by Militants and by the Labour-controlled council. I have been reading the accounts by Mr. Hamilton of the gross mismanagement of the city by the hon. Gentleman's friends. I can only say that the people of Liverpool now have an opportunity to elect a council which will not behave like the previous council.

Mr. Heffer: That is not true, and the Secretary of State knows it.

Mr. Ridley: People in Liverpool will have to live with the consequences of whatever council they elect. That is the nature of local democracy, and the hon. Gentleman must abide by that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I now appeal to the House for brief questions so that we may make progress? We have reached only question 6. Mr. John Cartwright, No. 6.

Homeless Young People

6. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further research his Department plans to institute into the issue of homeless young people.

Mr. John Patten: I have just announced major research into various aspects of homelessness, costing more than £300,000. We are also acting to help the homeless, for example, through our new mixed-funded housing association schemes, by a leaflet to encourage young people to take a realistic view about leaving home, and by our hostels initiative.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Minister aware that the overwhelming majority of homeless youngsters coming to constituency advice services all over London are local youngsters who are homeless through no fault of their own? Does he have any idea of the number of young people in Greater London who are moving around, sleeping on friends' floors, or sleeping rough, because they have no chance of being housed by a housing association or by a local council? Will he consider a crash programme of emergency housing to deal with the growing army of homeless young people?

Mr. Patten: I know the depth of the hon. Gentleman's concern about this. Governments have never collected statistics about the young homeless as such, and perhaps we should begin to do so. We are discussing that aspect with the local authority associations. The hon. Gentleman is right that both national Government and local authorities have a responsibility. The most recent figures available to me show that about 40 per cent. of people accepted as homeless give the reason that their friends or relatives no longer feel able to house them, so there is also a wider responsibility.

Sir George Young: Will the research cover the problems facing homeless young people in Ealing, who are especially vulnerable due to the NALGO strike? Is my hon. Friend aware that the borough may be in default of its statutory responsibility under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act because people cannot contact the department concerned? If that is so, what remedy is available for homeless young people in Ealing?

Mr. Patten: The picture is similar to that which emerged a year or two ago in Brent. In the past year the Labour administration in Ealing has been ruining a perfectly well-run borough and failing to deliver services

to people of all ages. It is an extremely serious matter when young people are unable to obtain the statutory help to which they are entitled.

Mr. John Fraser: Will the Minister take on board the point made by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), that it is extremely damaging to the cohesion and quality of our society and its economic health if thousands of single people cannot afford to live in the communities in which they grew up because they are unfortunate enough to be unemployed or homeless? Will the Minister establish a programme for local authorities and housing associations to provide accommodation at reasonable rents and with security of tenure so that young people can remain in the communities in which they grew up and thus maintain the quality of our society?

Mr. Patten: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman seems unaware that the Housing Corporation already has such a programme. The hon. Gentleman is in a good position to talk to Labour-controlled authorities such as Brent and Lambeth which have refused money offered to them on a plate this year to help with the problem of homelessness. In the same way, alliance Members might talk to Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets about the 3,000 flats and houses being kept empty there.

Unified Business Rate

7. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from small businesses on his proposal for a unified business rate as a replacement for the commercial rate.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I continue to receive representations both for and against the uniform non-domestic rate.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my hon. Friend aware that the concern of small businesses represented by the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses, especially those in low-rated areas, is that they may be required to pay more towards the cost of local government services under the unified business rate? Will he confirm that there will be a transitional period for businesses to adjust to the new rate, and state how long that period will be?

Mr. Chope: I cannot say exactly how long the transitional period will be, although there certainly will be such a period, but the major benefit for small businesses will be the knowledge that after the transitional period it will be impossible for the rates to rise by more than the rate of inflation.

Mr. Straw: Is the Minister aware of the widespread feeling that if Ministers wish to make the business rating system fairer they should go for improvements in the rate support grant system and for an urgent revaluation? Is he aware that figures further given by the Minister for Local Government show that business rates will rise by 31 per cent. in Westminster and by 28 per cent. in Hammersmith and Fulham, that business rates will be forced up by the Conservative party by 33 per cent. in Ealing, by 25 per cent. in the Prime Minister's area of Barnet and by no less than 57 per cent in the Minister's former borough of Wandsworth? Does he agree that *The Economist* was right when it said:

"The road to Mrs. Thatcher's proposed poll tax"—

and to the unified business rate—

"is one paved with banana skins and leading nowhere"?

Mr. Chope: Not at all. It is a bit rich to hear those statistics given by the hon. Gentleman, because they relate to the year 1986-87 and, as I understand it, he is supporting the fact that in Ealing in one year the rates have gone up by 65 per cent., an increase of £260 per employee for one particular firm in Ealing.

Mr. Spencer: Does my hon. Friend agree that one thing that small businesses cannot tolerate is the rate increase which is erratic and unpredictable? Is he aware that in Leicester in local election year the rates go up by 5 per cent. and that the following year the council does not care and the sky's the limit? No local or small business can possibly tolerate such a situation.

Mr. Chope: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend wholeheartedly. That is the major benefit that will flow from the national non-domestic rate.

Rate Support Grant

8. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cumulative reduction in the rate support grant since 1979 expressed at 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Ridley: The cumulative reduction in rate support grant between 1979-80 and 1986-87 in England amounted to £12·75 billion in 1986-87 prices. The cumulative increase in spending by local authorities in England over the same period amounted to £9·5 billion in 1987-87 prices.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that the rate support grant for Cumbria has been cut from 75 to 50 per cent. of net expenditure over those years? Does the Secretary of State understand that in the county of Cumbria we have now lost £60 million in the current year on a budget of £220 million and that we cannot afford it unless rates go up or services are cut? Does the Secretary of State understand that the people of Cumbria do not want that kind of politics and that we cannot afford it? Will he now re-examine the whole question of those settlements?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows that for the past eight years the Government have been transferring some of the burden from central to local taxes for local authorities. I merely make the point that, far from containing their expenditure, it has had no such effect, and local authorities have, in fact, increased it by £9·5 billion cumulatively over the same period.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is not the question of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) nonsense? Surely there has been a massive increase in real spending in many of the Labour authorities? They have been spending as though there were no tomorrow. Had there been no rate capping, Leicester, for instance, would have been in a diabolical situation. Leicester has been allowed to twin with Nicaragua, create the Nelson Mandela park, abuse the system totally, have "go gay" policies and put the ratepayers' interests at the bottom of the line, with party political propaganda on the rates.

Mr. Ridley: I confirm that the real increase in local authority current spending has been 13 per cent. in the past eight years. So whatever else they may be, no one can accuse local authorities of being short of resources.

Dr. Cunningham: Not only the House but the whole country will welcome the candour with which the Secretary of State has now confessed that it has been a deliberate policy of the Government for eight years to switch the burden from central taxation to rates. Is it not also the case, however, as Treasury figures published yesterday demonstrate, that the burden of central taxation for the average family with two children far from decreasing in those eight years, has gone up by about £20 per week? So, the result of the Government's policies after eight years is a massive increase in the rates—the direct result of policy, as he has just said—and an increase in the burden of central taxation as well. What bigger failure could there be than that?

Mr. Ridley: I can tell the hon. Gentleman what bigger failure there could be, and that is if his party got into power and spent another £37 billion a year.

Countryside Conservation

11. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the increase in *(a)* money terms and *(b)* real terms in expenditure since 1979 by his Department on the conservation of the countryside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department's support for conservation of the countryside is channelled principally through grant in aid to the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission and in the supplementary grants given to the national parks. These grants have gone up some 275 per cent. in total since 1979, which is 115 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend accept that the scale of the increase, at a time when Government expenditure has been carefully controlled, shows how great our commitment is to the countryside? Does he also agree that there is no room for complacency? In particular, there is a growing threat to our estuaries from a range of developments. Will he ensure that estuaries, which are among the best habitats, are properly protected in future?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is quite right. The expenditure represents the Government's settled and steady policy of raising the priority for the protection of the countryside as compared with the position left by the Labour Government. On the question of estuaries, the formal answer is, of course, that every individual project must be considered properly on its merits in due course. I think it is right to make it clear to my hon. Friend that some of our unspoilt estuaries must remain unspoilt, and that the planning system must be used to do that.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Will the Minister take time today to read the back page of *The Western Morning News*? Had he recognised that, according to this report, in the countryside of the south-west:

"Rivers were getting dirtier with pollution of 40 per cent. between 1980 and 1985"?

Does he recognise that the countryside people down there are drinking

"discoloured and unpleasant tasting water"

as a direct result of the meanness and shortsightedness of the Government? What will he do about it?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that the hon. Gentleman should learn not to refer to the inhabitants of the south-west peninsula as those "people down there". The delays in the time scale for water investment are rather longer than he understands. The problems in the south-west derive largely from the absolutely savage cuts in water investment imposed by the IMF on the Labour Government after 1976. We have restored those cuts and have spent more in real terms.

Mr. Rowe: Further to that last question, would it not be much safer in those circumstances if the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) decided that he would be better off staying north of the border?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that the hon. Gentleman is looking for a retirement home, and where better?

Mrs. Golding: How can the Minister equate his supposed care for the countryside with a letter that I received from him today saying that he is granting permission for a massive opencast site in my constituency which will involve the destruction of 27 rights of way, 47 acres of public open space, 68 acres of woodland, plus miles of hedgerow? Although this is for 100 jobs, which we all know are needed, is he aware that it will involve the complete and absolute disruption of the whole road system in my constituency, with heavy lorries, noise and dirt?

Mr. Waldegrave: We have just had a classic definition of NIMBY—not in my back yard. Anywhere else, the hon. Lady would welcome the cheap and secure fuel and the jobs, but not in her back yard. That is not a responsible way to proceed on national issues.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: May I refer to my hon. Friend's back yard and ask him to put a stop to the silly machinations about a Severn barrage, which will cost a lot of money and be an environmental catastrophe?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am aware of my hon. Friend's robust views on the matter. There will have to be plenty of time for his views and for the equally robust opposing views of other people on the matter to be properly investigated in due course.

Community Charge

14. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest total of representations received by him in respect of his proposals for a community charge in England; what proportion was in favour; and what proportion was against.

Mr. Chope: A summary of responses to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" was placed in the Library on 15 December.

Mr. Cunliffe: Will the Minister confirm that as recently as last week he told constituents of mine in Lancashire and Yorkshire that his poll tax would increase their family bills by about 15 per cent.? Will he further confirm that that applies especially in the townships of Wigan and Leigh, and especially to those owner-occupiers in lower-priced properties?

Mr. Chope: I can confirm that all single householders in the hon. Gentleman's constituency will be significantly better off as a result of the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Can my hon. Friend tell us the proportion of people who were in favour of the charge and the proportion who were against?

Mr. Chope: I do not have the precise proportions, but out of about 600 responses, 390 were in favour of the abolition of the domestic rating system.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Jack Straw.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman not want to ask a question?

Mr. Straw: I showed surprise, Mr. Speaker, because so many hon. Members were rising.

First, will the Minister confirm that his suggestion that all single householders will benefit from the poll tax is quite untrue because at the moment single householders on the lowest income pay nothing in rates because they get a full rebate? Under his proposals everybody, however poor, will pay at least 20 per cent. of the poll tax.

Secondly, will the hon. Gentleman confirm that his hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government has told constituents in a wide range of Conservative marginal constituencies in the north that in some cases their rate bills will almost double when the poll tax is in operation? In Conservative York it will go up by 25 per cent., in Bradford by 20 per cent., in Grimsby by 17 per cent., in marginal Pendle by 55 per cent., in marginal Hyndburn by 50 per cent. and in Labour Burnley by 90 per cent. Is that what the Conservatives have in mind when they say that they wish to create greater fairness by abolishing the rates?

Mr. Chope: If the hon. Gentleman looks carefully at the way in which the question that he asks is answered in the Green Paper, he will see that the examples are only examples and will by no means definitely be the resulting figures. The precise resulting figures will depend upon whether the authorities concerned spend wisely.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. John Heddle.

Mr. Tony Banks: What about other hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are making very slow progress today.

Rates

15. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the average rate increase in the current year *(a)* for councils under Conservative control, *(b)* for non-rate capped councils under Labour control, *(c)* for councils under alliance control and *(d)* councils under joint alliance/Labour control.

Mr. Chope: On average, rates in Conservative councils are up 5·4 per cent. compared with 12·4 per cent. for non-rate capped Labour councils, and 10·7 per cent. for councils under the control of the Social Democrats and/or Liberals. Political control in many of the councils with no overall control is unclear. The average rate increase in all such councils is 8·5 per cent. For those shire counties for which we have information, councils under joint alliance/Labour control are raising rates by significantly more than are those under joint Conservative/alliance control.

Mr. Heddle: Does my hon. Friend agree that his answer shows that authorities controlled by the Socialists or hung councils controlled by the Opposition parties have increased the rates by 100 per cent.? Therefore, does he not agree that a fairer system of local accountability and local expenditure should be introduced at the earliest possible opportunity?

Mr. Chope: I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. It is because the present system does not allow for proper accountability that the Opposition parties are so in favour of it.

Mr. O'Brien: The real reason why the figures highlight the problems about which the Minister speaks is that there is industrial deprivation and great unemployment in the north of England. Will the Minister give an assurance that under the new system, the poll tax, the poor, old-age pensioners, the widows and the unemployed will not suffer by having to pay the 20 per cent. extra that he proposes in the poll tax?

Mr. Chope: The figures that I have given do not refer specifically to the north or to the south. In Gloucestershire, for example, there has been a massive increase in the rates, but I am not aware that that county has a particular problem as a result of unemployment.

Voluntary Agencies, London

17. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will meet representatives of the voluntary agencies in London to discuss their funding in the next financial year.

Mr. Chope: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Rowe: Does my hon. Friend agree that, while the anxieties about the future voluntary agency funding have been substantially allayed, there are considerable difficulties for voluntary agencies in the annual budgeting that is forced upon them by so much public accounting? Will he give us an assurance that voluntary agencies, which increasingly are taking on jobs of considerable importance, will be able to look further into the future when considering the funding for which they are dependent on the Government?

Mr. Chope: I shall certainly take my hon. Friend's comment into consideration. Let me add that the present Government have done more than any previous Government for voluntary agencies.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order after the two statements.

Higher Education and Research

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the Government's policies for higher education.

Higher education is crucial to help our nation meet the economic, social and intellectual challenges of the final decade of this century. We must ensure that our universities, polytechnics and colleges respond to the country's requirements. Important reforms are already under way; I pay tribute to the efforts that are being made, especially in our universities, to adapt more closely to the needs of the nation. The White Paper we publish today announces new policies in three key areas: first, wider access to higher education so that the United Kingdom gets the skilled people we need for economic success and to compete in international markets; secondly, the financing and management of polytechnics and colleges in England; and, thirdly, the thorough-going reform of the University Grants Committee, along the lines recommended in the Croham report.

It is 21 years since the polytechnics were conceived. They have now come of age. They are successful, mature institutions with a strong national role, complementary to our universities. But they are held back by current planning and funding arrangements. Control by individual local authorities inhibits their progress towards meeting the challenges of the 1990s, and towards managing their resources to best effect.

We therefore intend to legislate to convert the polytechnics and other mainly higher education colleges in England to free-standing corporate bodies under boards of governors. Local and regional industry and commerce will be strongly represented on the boards. We want industry and those colleges to work more closely together. Industry will find it more attractive to place contracts for consultancy and research. We will be setting up a new Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council which will be independent of Government, although subject to guidance from the holder of my office. The council will succeed the National Advisory Body, and will contract with individual institutions for the provision of higher education.

Local education authorities will retain control of those colleges that do not provide predominantly for higher education. The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council may contract for the provision of degree and full-time HND and equivalent courses at such colleges. Other courses, including all part-time sub-degrees, at colleges remaining under local authority control will be a local responsibility: the present expenditure pooling arrangements will end. Responsibility for the 530,000 students on non-advanced further education courses in some 360 colleges across the country will continue to rest with local authorities.

The voluntary and other colleges of higher education that are grant-aided by my Department will be brought within the ambit of the new funding council. For the present, however, those arrangements will not be extended to cover the polytechnics and colleges of higher education in Wales.

Secondly, we intend to introduce legislation to change the University Grants Committee to an independent statutory body on the lines recommended by the Croham committee. We accept the Croham recommendations that that body should be smaller, with broadly equal numbers of academic and non-academic members and a chairman with substantial experience outside the academic world. The new body will be called the Universities Funding Council, and its primary responsibility will be the allocation of funds to individual universities under new contractual arrangements.

Thirdly, I want to encourage more people of all ages to go on to higher education. The Government already have an outstanding record on access to higher education. Student numbers have increased by almost 160,000 since we took office in 1979. After its fall in the 1970s, the participation rate for young people has increased by 15 per cent., and the number of mature entrants has risen by about a quarter. We remain committed to providing places for all with the intellectual competence, motivation and maturity to benefit from higher education.

Over the next decade, however, the number of 18-year-olds will fall by one third, and student demand will no longer be a sufficient basis for planning. A major determinant must also be the nation's demands for highly qualified manpower. The increase in graduate output already planned seems unlikely to do more than keep pace with the nation's requirements until 1990, and may be insufficient by the mid-1990s. This view is echoed in the excellent report published yesterday by the Council for Industry and Higher Education, which is chaired by my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior).

For the present, the Government's best judgment is that they should plan for the student numbers envisaged in the higher of the two projections which I published last November. This projection involves an increase in full and part-time student numbers from 906,000 in 1985-86 to 957,000 in 1990. That is an increase of 50,000. By the year 2000, almost one in five school leavers would then be going on to higher education. The Government want to ensure that within the total numbers the shift towards scientific and other vocational courses should be carried through.

Whether we reach these student numbers will depend crucially on this shift being achieved; on whether the schools and colleges succeed in raising the proportion of young people who qualify; and whether the universities, polytechnics and colleges can admit more mature students and more young people with vocational qualifications. The Government believe that higher education will meet these challenges.

Fourthly, the White Paper acknowledges that the quality of our research is recognised worldwide. The Government are committed to maintaining and enhancing the strength and quality of the science base, of which our institutions of higher education are a major and essential part. We attach particular importance to sustaining the work of the most able scientists and their teams. The Government are accordingly making available an additional £15 million for 1987-88 through the science budget. This funding is in addition to the £39 million increase in that budget for 1987-88 which I announced on 6 November last year, and the extra £17·5 million over three years for AIDS research by the Medical Research Council, announced since November.

The consequences of the increase I am announcing today for later years will be taken into account when we consider the science budget in this year's public expenditure survey. But I emphasise that we, and the scientific community, face difficult choices in the future.

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

We must be more selective. We must concentrate resources. We must get even better value for money from better targeted research. We must exploit our science to the utmost—and that is a matter as much for industry as for Government, the research councils and higher education.

Our country's higher education is among the best in the world. Our policies will secure and develop its distinctive strengths. They will extend its benefits to a wider section of the population and will ensure that it serves our nation.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): We have listened with interest to what the Secretary of State has had to say. [HON. MEMBERS: "Welcome it."] I welcome his conversion to the view that a policy of contraction simply will not do. Will he confirm that, according to his own White Paper, by the mid-1990s we shall have no more students in higher education than we have today? Will he also confirm that the CBI has calculated that industry will need at least 4 per cent. more graduates every year and that the report published yesterday of the Council for Industry and Higher Education — the organisation of industrialists and academics chaired by the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior)—concluded that the number of students planned by the Secretary of State will not be enough to meet the needs of the economy in the decade ahead?

Is it not also the case that, even with that small improvement in the participation rate that is planned by the White Paper, the proportion of 18-year-olds in higher education in this country by the mid-1990s will still be well behind those of the United States and Japan, as well as of several other European countries? It will also be lower than the 22 per cent. projected for 1981 in the Prime Minister's 1972 White Paper.

Is the Secretary of State aware that, in any case, many people will view his White Paper figures with some scepticism? We observe that the Government have buried away in a Committee the political time bomb of student grants, which are so crucial to access. We note that the Secretary of State is not making any commitments to provide extra resources—again so necessary for access—and we remember above all that the Government have squeezed and cut higher education during the past seven and a half years.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that the welcome increase in research funding no more than meets the cost of the recent salary increases? Is he aware that that leaves the science budget in the position in which the Advisory Board for the Research Councils said that resources fall short of what would be needed to maintain the buying power of that budget?

Is the Secretary of State aware that, as over the teachers and local government, so now over the control of higher education, he is taking power to himself? Why is he rejecting the advice of the National Advisory Body committee set up by his predecessor, that, although the day-to-day running of the polytechnics and colleges should be in their hands, the overall strategic responsibility for them should remain with the local education authorities? Higher education will now be run on the basis of Whitehall diktat, and the view that the Secretary of State always knows best.

Finally, is the Secretary of State aware that for all the glossy exterior of the White Paper and the fine words that he has spoken to the House this afternoon, he has ducked the real challenge of opening up higher education to a far wider group than ever before, and of providing more graduates in the decade ahead to meet Britain's needs? The right hon. Gentleman has failed to do that.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Member has something of a nerve to chide me about the numbers of students in higher education, because the Government of his party cut the number of students by several thousand. I am planning an increase of 50,000 by 1990, on top of the increase of 160,000 since 1979. Those are ambitious targets. I make it clear to the House that achieving them depends on young people coming forward with the right qualifications. It depends also on the polytechnics and universities being more willing to welcome into their studies young people with vocational qualifications. That is an important point.

The hon. Gentleman also chides me for centralising the policy relating to polytechnics. However, I remind him that the present system of polytechnic policy is already highly centralised. I have a statutory responsibility for the distribution of all the money and for approving or disapproving well over 50,000 individual courses. We are putting the polytechnics in the same relation to Government as universities. They will enjoy much greater freedom and entrepeneurial independence.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the National Advisory Body's good management practice working group. That group necessarily had to operate on the assumption that the existing structure would continue. It was not asked to consider alternative structures, and would not have been the appropriate body to do so.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will know that the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics made it absolutely clear in February that it favours the policy for polytechnics that we have announced. It stated that corporate status alone would not solve the problems and without direct funding, they are not convinced that it would go far enough. In support of my view, I quote a former Labour Minister in the Department of Education and Science, Mr. Gerry Fowler, who is the director of the North-East London polytechnic and who has clearly said that he wants the polytechnics to be independent.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the business before the House. There is another statement after this, followed by a ten-minute rule application and an important debate in which there is enormous interest. I shall allow questions on this statement to continue until 4 o'clock and then we shall move to the next statement.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the additional £15 million that he has announced for scientific research will be extremely welcome? Does he agree that scientific research in our universities should be a seamless robe, from the acquisition of fundamental knowledge to improvements within existing technology? Will he commit himself to sustaining the whole of that robe and not just parts of it?

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. Friend for his support; I know that for many years he has taken a great interest in the scientific funding of our universities. The money provided will allow key scientists, programmes and

research teams to be kept together. We all want good science—that is common ground across the House—and we want that science to come out more into the market place. It is evident from all our research funding that the link with technology transfer is not sufficiently strong. British industry simply does not spend enough on technology transfer and basic research development.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Is the Secretary of State aware that I am happy to welcome some aspects of the report — [HON. MEMBERS: "Only some aspects?"] The right hon. Gentleman asks for such welcomes and I give them to him — particularly the Government's reversed attitude to cuts in higher educaton and research? With falling rolls, is he not missing a unique opportunity substantially to increase the percentage of people going through higher education? I note that he did not answer the previous question about the numbers in higher education in 1990. Will he answer that now? Is he aware that the Council for Industry and Higher Education, to which he referred earlier, commenting on the 4 per cent. increase, said that this was "at odds" with Britain's ambitions for prosperity and renewal?

Is the Secretary of State aware that we can welcome his statements on corporate status for polytechnics? But why must that once again be centralised? [HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] This is an extremely important statement on which we have several points to make.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Many other hon. Members wish to take part.

Mr. Ashdown: Indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Why does the Secretary of State believe that, in these circumstances, he must take that power? Will not that concentration of control over the polytechnics result in the polytechnics being less able to meet the needs of their communities?

Mr. Baker: As a result of the decline in the birth rate which started in 1966, the number of 18-year-olds in higher education in the 1990s will drop by a third. The projections on page 6 of the White Paper show that the numbers will dip in 1990-91 and then rise again. If we get our policies in place and change the qualification requirements of young people, I hope that we may be able to avoid that dip.

I have read carefully what the hon. Gentleman has said in the past few days about alliance policy on further education——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Can you understand it?

Mr. Baker: It is quite difficult. The alliance policy carries a big price tag which rises into the billions, matching Labour Front Bench policies. But I shall return to that at a more propitious moment.

The hon. Gentleman and his party are not taking the right line if they object to our proposals for the polytechnics. Our policy is to increase their independence. The directors of polytechnics, and industry, want it and I am sure that it will result in much better relationships. I beg the hon. Gentleman not to commit his party to opposing that part of our policy.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on this positive statement which, despite the carping words of the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), will be widely welcomed? Can he confirm that the additional 50,000 students will be over and above the 160,000 to which he referred? Will he advise the House what the number of students in place was when Shirley Williams, the president of the SDP, was Secretary of State for Education and Science in a Labour Administration?

Mr. Baker: When the president of the SDP held the responsibility which I now hold, she cut student numbers and froze teachers' pay. When she held that position in a previous Government, she also came out in favour of student loans instead of student grants. I can confirm to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) that the extra 50,000 students is over and above the 160,000, and that that means that when we came into office, one in eight of the 18-year-olds in our country could expect to go into higher education, but by the end of the century it will be one in five.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I welcome the Secretary of State's conversion to Labour party policy in terms of wider access, but does he agree that, to make it successful, additional money must be made available for universities and polytechnics in real terms, taking into account the fact that during the lifetime of the Government on average they have suffered a reduction in their real unit of resource? Does he agree that, if we are to get more young poeple from working-class homes into higher education to use their talents and resources, we need a system whereby youngsters at the age of 16 years are persuaded to stay on for further and higher education? On that basis, what plans do the Government have for introducing a system of educational maintenance allowances?

Mr. Baker: We have no plans for the latter, because I do not believe that that will attract more people to stay on, and there is a great deal of deadweight expenditure involved in it. As to funding; we have witnessed over the last seven years an increase of 160,000 students—many of those 160,000 students come from, to use the hon. Gentleman's phrase, working class homes — who have been attracted into higher education because they see the benefits of it. It is as simple as that. As to funding of universities, there has been an increase in funding for 1987-88 of well over 10 per cent. That is the money that I announced before and after Christmas, and figure H of the White Paper shows planned increases over the next three years. By 1989-90, for the first time, the money that is spent on higher education will rise to over £4 billion.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his positive approach is profoundly welcomed by those of us who care deeply about education and is in marked contrast with the unmourned, and I hope now dead, Green Paper of 1985? Is my right hon. Friend also aware that the attention which has been given to the polytechnics to give them the status that they have earned and achieved is particularly welcome? Cambridge is also grateful.

Mr. Baker: We should, as a country, take pride in the polytechnics. They are excellent institutions. *[Interruption.]* I said that as a country we should take pride in them. As I visit many of the polytechnics, I see courses and faculties which are often better than in many of the neighbouring universities, and I am glad to see that the number of first-class degrees given by polytechnics rose by 20 per cent. last year. Polytechnics will now have the

[Mr. Baker]

independence that their maturity deserves and they will be able to establish a close relationship with local companies; that must be good for them.

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): Will the Secretary of State ensure that mature students can gain access to higher education through the provision of adequate family awards?

Mr. Baker: There has been a good increase in mature students — people who are aged 20, 30 or 40 years — going into higher education in the last few years; an increase of nearly a quarter. From memory, I think that they number between 40,000 to 50,000 a year. They tend to be funded in a variety of ways. If they have not gone into higher education first, they qualify for grants. Many of them are sponsored by companies, which is a growing practice that I warmly applaud and whenever I can I encourage companies to sponsor mature students.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his positively expansive programme for higher education. Is he aware of the warm welcome that his proposals for polytechnics will receive, not only from directors of polytechnics but also from teachers at polytechnics—I was such a teacher before I entered the House — but more importantly, from students in polytechnics, who will benefit from having teaching taken out of the party political arena and brought into an independent academic institution?

Mr. Baker: Many of the teachers, staff and faculties, apart from the directors, will welcome the independence that will come from not being subject to the control of the local education authority. They will be able to raise their own money much more freely. Many industries and companies will be willing to support them in the knowledge that their moneys will be directed to specific institutions for specific courses and disciplines and not merely to the local authority area. I am glad to say that the chairman of the Committee of Directors of Polytechnics, Dr. Rickett, made this clear effectively in a radio broadcast this morning.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Merionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Secretary of State accept that £15 million will be entirely inadequate for research council funding generally, when that is merely the figure required in Wales to bring the Principality into parity with the rest of the United Kingdom? If there is to be a real increase from 2·5 per cent. for research council founding in Wales, the system will require much more than £15 million.

We support the right hon. Gentleman's access policy, but how does he equate the notion of greater access with today's reports that six departments in University college, Cardiff are facing closure? How does he equate that with the £20 million to be taken out of the university of Wales over the next two years? In the absence of a statement from the Secretary of State for Wales, will the right hon. Gentleman announce the Government's proposals for Wales in the light of the Graham report?

Mr. Baker: The circumstances that have brought University college, Cardiff to its present position are peculiar to that institution, as I think the hon. Gentleman is aware. It would not be productive or sensible to generalise on them. No changes are proposed for Wales because the Welsh system is smaller than the English one and only a few colleges concentrate on higher education, which means that the need for change is different from that in England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will consider making changes similar to those proposed for England if the Welsh Advisory Board does not demonstrate in its current review that it can offer advice based on national and not local considerations.

Mr. Steven Norris (Oxford, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as befits the senior partner in the Oxbridge duo, Oxford has a university and a polytechnic, which means that his announcement is doubly welcome? Will he take it from me that the key phrase in his statement about polytechnics is that of their coming of age? Many of us who have seen the excellent work that is going on at Oxford polytechnic, for example, thoroughly endorse the phrase and welcome my right hon. Friend's moves. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the £15 million for research council funding of which he has spoken, which is most welcome, comes on top of the £40 million which is additional grant this year for the councils, and will fund the extremely generous pay award of 24 per cent. for the staff of the research councils and allow them to continue their research?

Mr. Baker: I can give my hon. Friend all those assurances. The money that I made available for the university pay settlement was £170 million over three years. That was made available after Christmas. It allows for an increase in academic pay of about 24 per cent., with 16 per cent. payable from 1 December and 7 per cent. from March 1988. That is a demonstration of the importance that we attach to university teachers. The money is additional and it will ensure that research money is available for key scientists and to keep key teams together. Research grants will be given, but the allocation will depend on the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

My hon. Friend mentioned Oxford polytechnic, which I remember visiting five or six years ago. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State visited it more recently. It is an outstandingly good and successful polytechnic.

Mr. Norris: Thank you.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Is the Secretary of State aware that his announcement reflects the Government's previous neglect of the education system and will be seen to have more to do with the approaching general election than a genuine interest in education? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware also that the university of Newcastle upon Tyne has recently announced a reduction of 140 academic posts as a direct result of the Government's policy, and his announcement will have little impact on that?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman will know that we have asked universities to examine their priorities, and universities throughout the country are doing that. During the lifetime of this Government, Newcastle polytechnic and other polytechnics have flourished like the green bay tree. Newcastle polytechnic has expanded and developed, as have other institutions in Newcastle. I was impressed by the college of art and design at Newcastle, which is providing services and training for 16 to 19-year olds. That will continue under Newcastle city council. The hon. Gentleman should recognise the enormous expansion in higher education that has occurred under this Government.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): May I thank my right hon. Friend for the extra £15 million that he has announced for research for the civil science Vote? In doing so he has proved once again that he is a listening Minister and that it is worth while for Back Benchers occasionally to make speeches in the small hours of the morning advocating a change in Government policy. We thank him very much.

Mr. Baker: In the past few weeks there has been a lot to listen to regarding scientific research. The debate that took place on the Consolidated Fund was certainly pointed, because the hon. Members who took part spoke forcefully of their experience of universities in their constituencies as well as their broader experience. I am glad that that debate contributed to allowing me to announce the increased expenditure today.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Why has the Secretary of State not waited for the report from the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education, "Management for a Purpose", which I gather his Department paid more than £350,000 to commission? It would have been useful if the Secretary of State had waited for that report, because there is a great deal of scepticism about the centralisation that is taking place. Although I agree about the coming of age of the polytechnics, one of the main functions of those polytechnics has been to bring the university sector into closer contact with their localities and industries—rather than the reverse. We are fearful that that could be lost by this centralisation and the proposals announced this afternoon.

Mr. Baker: When the hon. Gentleman sees the proposals in the White Paper, I think that he will appreciate that the present system is already highly centralised. I am trying to create polytechnics as independent, free-standing institutions funded by an independent council. It will be guided by advice from the holder of my office, but will have the same independence as the University Grants Committee has of Government.

With regard to the NAB working party, I saw the chairman a week ago and explained the Government's proposals. Indeed, I answered that point about 10 minutes ago.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in the seven years since my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle) first proposed a polytechnic grants committee, nothing has happened other than to prove that the work of the polytechnics is too important to be left to the whims and prejudices of local councils? Will my right hon. Friend confirm to the House that, since the war, the only Government under whom the proportion of 18-year-olds entering higher education fell was the previous Labour Government when Mrs. Shirley Williams was Secretary of State?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend can rely upon me to make the most of that—it is a two-barrelled gun. This failure was both under Labour and also when the president of the SDP was Secretary of State. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend with regard to polytechnics. I believe that, in the past few years, many directors of polytechnics have found it extremely irksome to be dependent upon political control. They have seen me—many of them are not particularly of Conservative persuasion—and have said that they cannot stomach any longer the nitpicking and political interference to which many of them have been subjected.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind those hon. Members who have not been called that if they put down questions this Friday they will be answered during education Questions on 28 April.

Higher Education (Scotland)

4.2 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on arrangements for planning and funding of higher education in Scotland announced in today's White Paper on higher education. This follows consultations on the recommendations in the report of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council on future strategy for higher education in Scotland and advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the Croham committee on the University Grants Committee.

In my statement to the House on 17 July 1986, I said that the Government accepted STEAC's view that there is scope for improvement in the planning and co-ordination of provision in higher education by the universities and colleges in Scotland. In reaching decisions on the future, I have recognised that six out of eight Scottish universities opposed the central STEAC recommendation for a separate Scottish body with funding responsibilities for both the university and college sectors. I share the views of the universities that they should continue to be, and be seen to be, an integral part of the British university system and believe that that might be prejudiced by removing them from the British funding framework of the UGC and its successor.

Irrespective of the source of funding, it is, however, highly desirable that both the university and college sectors can plan the development of their provision in the knowledge of what other institutions in Scotland are planning to do. But knowledge is not enough—we need arrangements to ensure that plans can be discussed, adapted and co-ordinated to take account of what other institutions intend to do and to ensure that overall provision in both sectors is in line with likely national and local needs. That is why we announce in the White Paper that we propose to accept and build on the recommendations of the Croham committee that the proposed Universities Funding Council should have a Scottish committee. The committee will play an important part in planning higher education in Scotland. It is important that the Universities Funding Council and its Scottish committee should take into account the needs of Scottish higher education as a whole. To this end in future the Secretary of State for Scotland shall give the Universities Funding Council guidance on plans for the other sectors of higher education in Scotland and will expect it to have regard to his views on the implication of Scottish needs for the university sector. These will, of course, be consistent with guidance given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to the Universities Funding Council. The UFC and the Secretary of State for Scotland will then be able to plan provision, with the help of the Scottish committee, in the university and college sectors respectively, with a clear knowledge of the implications of each other's plans.

I expect the committee to advise the UFC on the implications of the Scottish education system for the needs of the Scottish universities. It will, in consultation with my Department, consider the demand for higher education in Scotland and the balance of provision between its constituent parts. Appointments to the Scottish committee will be a matter for the Universities Funding Council in consultation with the Secretary of State for Scotland. I envisage that the committee will include members drawn from the non-university sector and employers as well as from the UFC and the universities and that there will be representation from the Scottish Office.

I believe that the establishment of a Scottish committee of the UFC on these lines will mark a very important development in the relationship of the Secretary of State for Scotland with the university sector, with far-reaching implications for the proper planning of higher education. For the first time he will have formal access to a group taking an overview of the needs of the Scottish university sector and will be able to discuss with them his views on the priorities for higher education in Scotland and the plans of the college sector.

I am confident that the arrangements will be welcomed by the universities in Scotland. They will be able to maintain their role as part of the British system, but will have a new focus for looking at Scottish needs. They will be better able to plan their provision in the light of knowledge of each other's plans and those of the central institutions. The central institutions for their part should welcome the more systematic opportunity afforded by the Scottish committee for joint planning between my Department and the universities on how demands from students and employers should be met. Most importantly, Scotland should benefit from the improved arrangements for co-ordination and planning of higher education to meet the changes envisaged by the White Paper between now and the end of the century.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): The Secretary of State, perhaps typically, has opted for the least exciting possibilities open to him. To many of us on the Labour Benches his announcement sounds like a recipe for muddle and confusion.

Even in terms of the Croham report, is not the Secretary of State a minimalist? I concede that Croham offered a Scottish committee of the University Grants Committee, but it did so only if a Scottish planning and funding body was not established. The Secretary of State has made a great deal of the views of the six out of eight Scottish universities, but perhaps it would be more accurate to suggest that they were the views of six out of eight principals. In any event, they emphasised their fears about the peer group review. That matter was specifically referred to the Croham committee. Can the Secretary of State confirm that Croham made it clear, when considering the matter, that a separate funding solution would not affect or disrupt the maintenance of national standards or any other aspect of the peer group review as it presently operates?

Is not the Scottish sub-committee of the Universities Funding Council a poor apology for an effective, co-ordinating body, which would consider central institutions, colleges of education and universities, as recommended by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council report?

The new system means that the Secretary of State for Scotland, together with his colleague the Secretary of State for Education and Science, will intimate his views to the Universities Funding Council. The sub-committee is no more than a nod in the direction of consultation; a little bit of window-dressing that perhaps cannot do much harm, but certainly will not do much good.

The Secretary of State will be familiar with paragraph 8.19 of the Croham report which, when discussing the

possibility of a Scottish sub-committee, advised that it would have the specific remit of looking at the existence of separate Scottish school examinations and four-year honours courses at the universities. The report said that it would consider, specifically,

"the proposed resource distribution as it affected Scottish universities".

Will he say whether that distribution of resources, in particular, will be part of the remit of the sub-committee he is establishing? If it disagrees with the Universities Funding Council, what will be its powers to do anything about it? Can it merely complain on the sidelines or can it really and effectively affect the outcome?

The Croham recommendation was that the Scottish Education Department or any sub-committee would be represented by an assessor. Will the Minister tell us whether it will be by an assessor on this occasion or will it be by direct appointment and, if so, why has there been a change? Will he accept that there is nothing in the sad and damaging cuts of recent years to suggest that Scottish universities will be safer as a result of the rejection of the STEAC proposals for an over-arching body?

The Secretary of State knows of the Opposition's commitment to a Scottish assembly—*[Laughter.]* There is a certain amount of nervous laughter by hon. Members. When that assembly is in being, it will have responsibility for the universities and for their separate funding. Will he note our regret that the chance has not been taken now to move in that direction and to accept the STEAC vision of an over-arching body with the necessary authority to plan and build a healthy future for higher education in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: We have just had the somewhat ludicrous occurrence of the hon. Gentleman seeking to present himself as the champion of the Scottish universities while he simultaneously rebukes the Government for having accepted the representations of the Scottish universities. The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He knows perfectly well that overwhelming opinion among Scottish universities was adverse to the recommendations of the STEAC committee in this respect. He knows also, or he ought to know, that even among the central institutions there was a difference of view, with a minority of the central institutions rejecting the recommendations of the STEAC committee.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of individual questions. He asked about peer review and suggested that the Croham committee had said that peer review need not be affected by separate funding of the Scottish universities. That is indeed the case. However, if the hon. Gentleman wished to be open and frank with the House he might have added that the Croham committee qualified that statement by suggesting that parity of research funding could not be guaranteed if British peer review advice was interpreted by separate funding bodies north and south of the border. As the Scottish universities have a legitimate interest in access to proper research funding, the hon. Gentleman might have reminded the House of that aspect of Croham's conclusions as well.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the membership of the Scottish committee. *[Interruption.]* He might advise his hon. Friends to remain silent while I am answering his questions. The hon. Gentleman asked about membership of the Scottish committee and I said in my opening statement that there would be representation from the Scottish Office. We shall naturally wish to have consultations on the detailed question of representation, but we wish to have a broad base of representation on the Scottish committee, which will include not only the Scottish Office but representatives of others with an interest in the work of the Scottish committee.

I was somewhat puzzled, surprised and disappointed by the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the Scottish committee of the sort we propose would have only what he chose to describe as cosmetic functions. He seems to have failed to appreciate that the announcement we are making today goes significantly beyond the recommendations of the Croham committee. The Croham committee merely suggested that there should be——

Mr. Dewar: You have rejected STEAC.

Mr. Rifkind: I am well aware of the fact that it rejected STEAC. I informed the hon. Gentleman that it rejected STEAC so he does not need to remind me of that fact. The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that what we have announced today provides the Secretary of State for Scotland, for the first time, with a locus with regard to the universities to ensure that the interests of Scottish higher education are taken into account, to ensure that there is a minimum of duplication between the role of the central institutions and those of the universities and to ensure, as does the White Paper and my statement, that the proposed Universities Funding Council should have regard to the views of the Secretary of State for Scotland with regard to the needs of higher education in Scotland. That represents, for the first time, a significant development in our ability to co-ordinate higher education in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman might at least have had the grace to acknowledge that, even if he was disappointed that the STEAC recommendations were not being accepted.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to apply the same ruling to this statement as I applied to the previous one. In view of the pressure of business, I propose to allow questions to go on for a further 15 minutes. I remind hon. Members that there are Scottish questions on Wednesday next week.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is right to accept the wise advice of six out of the eight Scottish universities and set up a Scottish co-ordinating committee? Will he agree that there are more students in higher education in Scotland than ever before and that that shows how the additional finance put into education by the Government is paying off?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. The number of students in Scotland in higher education has increased by about 10,000 since the Labour Government left office in 1979.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Secretary of State accept that there is a wide feeling of victimisation within Scottish universities at the way in which they are being treated, that there is particular discrimination against small universities and small departments and that there is mistrust as to whether the University Grants Committee does understand the Scottish dimension? The right hon. and learned Gentleman will know that I have a constituency interest in the university of Aberdeen and am rector of the university of Dundee, both of which are facing savage cuts that will devastate their ability to face

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

the future. Will he acknowledge that what he is proposing today is merely cosmetic and that there is no evidence that that body will be able to address itself to the fundamental problems facing Scottish universities? Is he prepared to accept that that is the case, that more action will be needed and that more funding for Scottish universities and colleges will be necessary?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has made a general and unqualified statement. If he is seeking to imply that he wishes that the recommendations of STEAC had been accepted, he has to explain why he takes a view that is contrary to the representations made by the university of Aberdeen and the university of Dundee, of which he says he is the rector. He does not seem to be in touch with opinion in the two universities to which he has chosen to refer. The hon. Gentleman should bear that in mind.

Mrs. Anna McCurly (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that the new committee provides a proper forum for providing funds for small but significant research programmes in Scotland, which the UGC has failed to do?

Mr. Rifkind: The purpose of the Scottish committee is to ensure that the new Universities Funding Council will have full access to information as to the particular needs of Scottish universities and will, therefore, be able to take into account those needs and the needs of higher education in Scotland overall in coming to its decisions.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Secretary of State aware that the structure he has announced today, with a sub-committee of the Universities Funding Council, having no executive powers, acting only in an advisory capacity and subject to the guidance of the Secretary of State, is completely inadequate to meet the basic recommendation of STEAC, which was that we need a coherent, single planning and funding body for university and non-university sectors of higher education in Scotland? The structure announced today does not even meet the need for a single planning body, leaving the question of funding aside. Seven out of the eight universities want a single planning body.

Mr. Rifkind: I have to point out to the right hon. Gentleman that the precise role of the Scottish Office in future will be to provide that planning and co-ordinating responsibility of the sort to which I have drawn attention in my statement. For the first time the Scottish Office will not only be involved in the planning and funding of the central institutions in Scotland, but will have the right and responsibility to be involved in the co-ordination of the central institutions with the Scottish universities. The right hon. Gentleman should appreciate that, where the majority of Scottish universities and a number of the central institutions made representations against the proposals put by STEAC, it is a sensible outcome to have a situation where the involvement of the Scottish universities in the United Kingdom as a whole is maintained.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that when he was Secretary of State for Scotland and the subject of devolution was considered, the Government of which he was a member rejected the idea of the Scottish universities being devolved to a separate funding arrangement. The right hon. Gentleman had better reconcile what he said then with what he says now.

Sir Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that both of today's statements should help to improve standards and value for money in higher education? Does he agree that colleges and universities could contribute to those aims by re-examining the academic year? The principal of Aberdeen university has shown how that might be done, and he should have the support of Ministers and academics.

Mr. Rifkind: That is a matter for the university of Aberdeen to determine, and I do not wish to comment on it. One of our objectives is to ensure that there is a proper use of resources and that unnecessary duplication is avoided. There has been occasional duplication of resources between the central institutions and the Scottish universities — for example, in the subject areas of engineering and technology, business and management, and architecture and town and country planning. The proposals have been announced to ensure better co-ordination of provision.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): Does not the nature of the sub-committee for Scotland give us the worst of both worlds? Is there not a danger that the Secretary of State for Scotland may end up playing second fiddle to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who will now be involved in the Scottish universities? What guarantees can the Secretary of State offer that the Universities Funding Council, which will appoint the sub-committee with his agreement, will not end up with a creature that suits it?

Mr. Rifkind: Because the appointment of members to the Scottish committee will be planned in consultation with the Secretary of State for Scotland. I have already outlined the broad spectrum of people—from a broad spectrum of backgrounds—that I would expect to serve on that committee.

The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I subscribe to a common policy of government. My role will be to ensure that proper account is taken of the interests of higher education in Scotland and that the role of the central institutions and universities in Scotland are more effectively co-ordinated. The universities in Scotland want that co-ordination to be effected without it being done at the expense of the great value that they rightly attach to their presence as part of the United Kingdom university structure.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his statement is most welcome, not only because he has accepted the advice that I gave in the Scottish Grand Committee in January of last year, but because Scotland will get the best of both worlds? Students from all parts of Great Britain will continue to be able to come to high quality universities such as the university of St. Andrews.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that possibly the most important and welcome news that we have heard this afternoon has been that scientific research will continue without pause this year, and that more young Scots will have access to higher education in the years to come than ever before?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, my hon. Friend is indeed correct that the announcement of an additional £15 million for research that was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science earlier will make a valuable contribution to ensuring the smooth continuation of important research during the years to come.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State concede that what we all want is a Scottish higher education system that meets the needs of the 21st century? We are concerned that the sub-committee will not hold to systematic views, but be a pantomime horse that will try to face in both directions at once. There will be no co-ordination or thrust in relation to the needs of Scottish education, now or in the future. We desire a thrustful organisation, a spearhead, a planning organisation, and that has manifestly not been included in the statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman makes a bland statement without supporting evidence. He must acknowledge that the views that he has expressed are flatly contradicted by the vast majority of those in the universities of Scotland, and he will have to explain that.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement of the future involvement of the Secretary of State for Scotland in the Universities Funding Council and the Scottish committee. That is clearly a major step forward.

My right hon. and learned Friend has said that there is a clear need, accepted by everyone, for effective planning across the binary divide in Scotland. Is he satisfied that the system—it is essentially a guidance system—that he has announced will achieve that? As regards his point about demand, does he agree that the crucial figures are the participation rates in higher education in Scotland, which have been excellent in recent years? Can he give the House any guidance on how those figures are likely to go next year?

Mr. Rifkind: I believe that the UFC and the Scottish committee will have the same interest in the proper co-ordination of higher education in Scotland as would the Scottish Office. That will represent substantial progress.

On participation in higher education in Scotland, my hon. Friend knows that the White Paper is based on an assumption that the proportion of young people who will have qualifications for entry into higher education in the United Kingdom as a whole will have reached 20 per cent. by the end of the century. I am happy to inform my hon. Friend that Scotland reached that figure in 1980. By 1985-86, the proportion in Scotland was 23 per cent. That shows the great opportunities that are available for higher education in Scotland under this Government.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): When the Secretary of State referred to six out of eight universities, if he did not mean exclusively vice-chancellors and principals, precisely whose opinions did he take into account before making his statement? Why has he disregarded the overwhelming—if not unanimous—view of students, who supported the STEAC recommendations about an over-arching body? Why has the Secretary of State rejected their views?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not aware of any referendums having been held in the universities of Scotland to establish the views of students as a whole. Such referendums have not been held. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman's assessment of students' opinions is no better or worse than that of anyone else. We are entitled to assume that the views of university principals — unless they have been repudiated by the university courts or senates — represent the views of the universities. If the hon. Gentleman were able to inform me that the majority of university principals were in favour of the STEAC recommendations, he would not have tried to suggest that that was of little value in determining opinion in the universities.

The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the considerations that led the last Labour Government to believe that the integrity of the British university system should prevent the Scottish universities' removal from that are as powerful now as they were then.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that Scottish universities enjoy exceptionally generous funding compared with those in England and Wales? I have seen figures that suggest that they receive as much as 25 per cent. more. Can he confirm that the new system will not prejudice that, since funding under a Scottish Office body might? Are we not witnessing yet another example of the Opposition's Scottish assembly dogma being put before the interests of the people of Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: No, I would not suggest that the Scottish universities are funded better or worse than universities elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Because the Scottish universities have four-year degree courses, they require additional funding for each student, compared with that for students in universities with three-year degree courses. That means that a higher proportion of funding goes to Scottish universities.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): May I assure my right hon. and learned Friend that, contrary to the ridiculous nonsense uttered by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), his statement will be welcomed in Aberdeen, particularly by the Robert Gordon's institute of technology, which will now be able to increase its number of science and technology students? Is my right hon. and learned Friend also aware that his statement will be welcomed by the university of Aberdeen with the demise of the University Grants Committee? Will the Universities Funding Council look closely at the need for Aberdeen university to have more money for research, rather than have penalties imposed upon it by the UGC?

Mr. Rifkind: The Universities Funding Council has not yet come into existence, so it is difficult for me to anticipate what its view will be. But I remind my hon. Friend of the important announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, that the resources for research at universities in the United Kingdom are being increased substantially.

Mr. John Currie (Cunninghame, North): Will any organisations have a right to serve on the Scottish committee, or will they simply have to take their chance? Does my right hon. and learned Friend hope to see employers' organisations on the committee, so that there is some industrial input, in these days when we require more industry?

Mr. Rifkind: Members of the proposed Scottish committee will be there as individuals rather than representing organisations, but I have said that I envisage that the committee will include members drawn from the non-university sector and employers, as well as from the UFC, and that there will be representations from the universities in Scotland as well as from the Scottish Office.

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): May I take it from what my right hon. and learned Friend has told the House that the proposal will preserve the university framework in Great Britain, with a clear Scottish dimension within that framework? Is he satisfied that the importance of higher education throughout Scottish society will be fully recognised and pressed by the Scottish angle of the new body?

Mr. Rifkind: I firmly believe that the proposals that we have announced today represent the best of both worlds for the Scottish universities because they not only provide continuing integration of the United Kingdom structure, which is what the universities want, but, for the first time, they enable a sensible co-ordination of the needs of higher education in Scotland, which both the Scottish universities and the central institutions recognise as being important to their future.

Questions to Ministers

4.31 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I shall not complain unduly at the fact that today's was the second environment Question Time when, unfortunately, I failed to catch your eye—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Yes. Part of the reason for that is that questions tend to be rather long on both sides of the House. On the Labour Front Bench, we have seven shadow Ministers who all seem to want to intervene at least twice, which cuts the time for Back Benchers to ask questions.

Question No. 3, asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), was about Fulham football club. I wanted to ask a question about Chelsea football club, which is also very much under threat——

Mr. Speaker: Order. With great respect, I anticipated that: That question was about Fulham. I did not think that Chelsea would be in order.

Mr. Banks: I think that I could have found a way of linking the two, but that is not the point.

The point is this. The Minister responsible for sport was present at that time. We do not have many opportunities to direct questions at him. I should like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether you exercise some judgment when it is the turn of a Minister to answer questions, who is not often put at the Dispatch Box—given his performance, one can understand why. That should be an opportunity for us to ask direct questions of a Minister who is not often in the Chamber. In future, when such an opportunity arises, will you exercise some discretion, Mr. Speaker, and allow the questions to run on for a little while?

Mr. Speaker: I sympathise with what the hon. Gentleman said, but, with the greatest respect, I cannot use my discretion to allow supplementaries to go wide of a question. The course that the hon. Gentleman should take is to table questions and hope that they come near the top of the list on the Order Paper.

Hon. Member for Ynys Môn

4.33 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am raising a matter of which I have informed you. I have also informed the hon. Member concerned.

The hon. Member in question, the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), has just made a statement that he made multiple applications for British Telecom shares. In view of that statement, Mr. Speaker, have you heard that it is the hon. Gentleman's intention to make a personal statement to the House, on his own admission, which may be a serious crime?

Mr. Speaker: I have not had any intimation at all of a personal statement, and I do not know anything about that matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that anything can arise. It is not a matter of order.

Mr. Skinner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is well known that Members of Parliament are supposed to put statements about shares and their interests in various matters in the Register of Members' Interests. I should like to know—*[Interruption.]* Just hear this out. In future, we must make sure that we have a full and comprehensive register. When people make multiple applications for shares in companies that have been privatised, for which they have voted in the House, will you see to it, Mr. Speaker, that that is included? Would it be a sensible item to include on the register in future, because—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I heard the hon. Gentleman. He should take up that matter with the Committee concerned. It is not a matter of order.

Mr. Skinner: Well, you pass it on. You are supposed to be in charge.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not my role. He must make his own decisions in these matters.

BILL PRESENTED

Dartford—Thurrock Crossing

Mr. Secretary Moore, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Channon and Mr. Peter Bottomley, presented a Bill to provide for the construction of a bridge over the River Thames between Dartford in Kent and Thurrock in Essex and of associated works; to provide for the Secretary of State to be the highway authority for the highways passing through the tunnels under that river between Dartford and Thurrock and their approaches, instead of Kent and Essex County Councils; to provide for the levying of tolls, by a person appointed by the Secretary of State or by the Secretary of State, in respect of traffic using the crossing; to provide for transfers of property and liabilities of those Councils to the person appointed and the Secretary of State and for the transfer to the Secretary of State of property and liabilities of the person appointed on termination of his appointment; to provide for the management of the crossing, including the imposition of prohibitions, restrictions and requirements in relation to traffic, and otherwise in relation to the crossing; and for connected purposes; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 126.]

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the ten-minute Bill. *[Interruption.]* Order.

Mr. Skinner: Why do you not tell the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and his hon. Friend instead of picking on Labour Members?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very unseemly to shout across the Chamber in that way.

Housebuyers' Protection Bill

4.36 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): I beg to move,

The leave be given to bring in a Bill to ensure the registration for public inspection of the selling prices of all residential properties; and for connected purposes.

I shall break all the records for brevity in introducing the Bill, but it is a matter of importance.

For most people, buying a house or flat is the biggest financial transaction of their life, yet that decision is made with less knowledge than when they buy, for example, a second-hand motor car or a packet of cornflakes. The key problem to which my Bill directs itself is that the buyer of a house or flat does not know how much to offer when he or she looks at an estate agent's list. Of course the asking price is published, but we all know that, while sometimes the asking price will be identical to the selling price, at others there may be a 20 or 30 per cent. difference between the two. Estate agents—perhaps not surprisingly—are rather secretive about the prices at which their properties sell.

My Bill is simplicity itself. It provides that, when a house or flat is sold, the price at which it changes hands will be registered for inspection, probably at the local town hall or Inland Revenue office. The information to be given will be the price of the property—I am talking about residential properties only—the date of the transaction and whether the property was sold freehold or leasehold. The name of the purchaser or the seller will not be published. Indeed, that information is already made available to the Inland Revenue at the Land Registry, but is not published by it, so the cost of that procedure would be minimal.

The advantage is that when anyone seeks to buy a property in a particular area, all he or she has to do is to inspect the lists on which are shown the dates of transaction and prices of similar properties that have been sold in the recent past. That enables the buyer to make his or her offer for the property with much more knowledge than ever before. The results will be to stabilise prices—not to control them, because demand and supply will still affect the price levels; but the Bill will have at least some effect in lessening the likelihood of gazumping because better knowledge of prices will give people less incentive to leap over a price that has already been partially agreed.

The Bill will also help in the valuation of properties, and in some instances it will even be of help to sellers. I cannot speak for all estate agents, but the few with whom I have discussed the Bill seem to think that it is not a bad idea. I say most emphatically that I do not regard this provision as an invasion of privacy. The individual's name would not be involved. I believe that this is a simple and effective way of protecting consumers in their capacity as buyers of property and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alfred Dubs, Mr. John Fraser, Mr. Frank Dobson, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Nick Raynsford, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Robin Corbett, Mr. George Howarth and Mr. David Clelland.

HOUSEBUYERS' PROTECTION BILL

Mr. Alfred Dubs accordingly presented a Bill to ensure the registration for public inspection of the selling prices of all residential properties; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 1 May and to be printed [Bill 131.]

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill

As amended, (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

New clause 1

DEATH PENALTY

'A person convicted by the unanimous verdict of a jury of the premeditated killing of another person or of knowingly and intentionally killing another person in a manner, or for a reason, or in circumstances which a reasonable person would consider to be evil, shall suffer death in the manner authorised by law.'.

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) to move the new clause, I announce to the House that I have selected amendments (a), (b), and (c) to the new clause. I repeat what I said earlier. An enormous number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. I have no way of limiting the length of speeches. However, it would be very helpful today if an average of 10 minutes per speech could be achieved. That would mean that a great many right hon. and hon. Members would be called.

4.41 pm

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I start from the premise that every single right hon. and hon. Member is greatly concerned about the level of violence in this country, that we all have an equal concern for the sanctity of life, and that we are all equally conscious of the responsibility that rests on our shoulders for the safety of those whose lives are at risk from criminals. I hope that every hon. Member will start from the same premise. That is to say, that no one has a monopoly of those thoughts or values. The difference between us is that those who support the new clause sincerely believe that the death penalty has a part to play in connection with those concerns and responsibilities. We do not claim that the death penalty will resolve all the evil violence with which our society is beset. However, we do claim that it has a role to play in lessening it.

I will explain fully to the House why I say that, but first I want to deal quickly with one or two generalities. Some people say—I think mainly to divert attention from the real issues—"Why again and why now?". The answer is quite simple. The reason we say that the House should consider the subject again is that we are putting a new approach before the House — and we are putting it before the House at a time when there has been a rising tide of evil, the like of which I have never seen in my life. We believe that the House should debate the new approach in the light of the new circumstances, and we believe that the public expects the House to do that. With regard to the question "Why now?", it is because the Bill is the perfect, if not the only, vehicle for raising the issue before the House, and it was inevitable once the Bill was presented that this debate would take place at this stage.

Next I want to consider another but quite different generality. There are some who will always say that in no circumstances is it permissible for anyone to take life, and that the worst of all is for the state to take life because that sets an example of brutality. I do not agree with that. I shall endeavour to show why I think that it is wrong, but it is a point of view. Neither part of that has ever been accepted by the majority of this House.

It has always been accepted that the death penalty is the appropriate penalty for treason and that the state has the right to execute those found guilty. Less well known outside the House is the fact that our service men are liable to execution if convicted of any one of five offences. It is well known in this House because as recently as 10 April 1986 there was an attempt, no doubt very sincere, to abolish those penalties. In fact, that was defeated by a majority of 3:1, and it is interesting to note that that majority included a significant number of hon. Members who on other occasions have voted against the death penalty. Maybe some of them have changed their minds. Whether that is so or not, it is clear that for the majority the question is not whether anyone guilty of any crime should ever be executed, but which ones should be executed. That is the question to which we who have tabled the new clause have addressed our minds, producing in the result a wholly new approach.

Immediately after the war, there were great debates in the House and in another place on this very issue. The then Archbishop of Canterbury put forward a view that was pretty representative of others when he said that, although he felt that the weight of experience and argument was against the abolition or suspension of the death penalty at that point, he was against returning to the state where it was the automatic penalty for all murder, and he hoped that someone would propose a way of discriminating between the less heinous and the more heinous, and he felt that if someone did so that would be a real step forward.

In an attempt to meet that, the Government of the day brought forward such a proposal based on a list principle. It listed certain types of murder that were supposed to be more heinous than others. That was enacted in statutory form in the Homicide Act 1957, and in my opinion that was a disaster. It led to the Lord Chief Justice of the day saying later, in 1964, that he was for the abolition of the death penalty not on any moral grounds, but merely because the Homicide Act 1957 was so bad. I would need a great deal of persuading before I would support any return to any kind of list because any kind of list necessarily involves a real danger of terrible anomalies. We have sought to meet the archbishop's point while avoiding the pitfalls of the list system.

I want to explain briefly to the House how the proposal would work because there has been the most fearful misunderstanding or misrepresentation, call it what you like. The system would work like this: the judge would have to say to the jury, "Ladies and gentlemen, you have to be sure, and unanimous, that the accused killed the person referred to. You have to be sure that it was premeditated or that it was done knowingly and intentionally. But that is not enough. You must also be sure, all of you, that the manner, reason or circumstances in which it was done was such that any reasonable person would consider it to be evil." The judge would say, "I cannot define evil to you. That is for you, the members of the jury, to exercise your qualitative judgment." There is nothing new in that. Already in many cases a qualitative judgment must be exercised by the jury. Where a qualitative judgment is required, what better body to exercise that judgment than a jury?

[Sir Ian Percival]

Two objections have been raised to that so far. One was raised this morning that, on the drafting, two offences are created, one up to the first "or" in the new clause and one after. I do not think that that is so. Even so, there is nothing in that point which, if it is a defect, cannot easily be cured by including the words, "in either case done". On that point, if there is a defect, it can readily be put right and I would agree to doing that to remove any doubt.

The other objection is on the question of the definition of evil. I do not think that a jury would have difficulty with the word "evil". It is not a word that I dreamt up. It has been used by judges frequently recently. I noticed two cases in the past 10 days—they have nothing to do with my use of the word — where the judges in sentencing said, "You are evil men." "These were evil crimes". In any case, the system would work as follows. For example, if Hindawi had succeeded in killing 376 people, would any jury have had any doubt or would it have taken them more than five seconds to decide on the requirement of evil? Hon. Members do not appreciate that there is a built-in fail-safe provision in that if just one member of the jury says, "No, I am not sure", there can be no conviction under the clause.

I do not claim that my wording is perfect, but I know that if the new clause is carried there will be the most rigorous examination by everyone who is interested, including both Houses of Parliament and all the lawyers. I would in no sense resent that. On the contrary, any assistance which would improve the wording would be most welcome. It would be as flattering as it would be unlikely that I had got it exactly right first time.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Will my right hon. and learned Friend address himself to a problem relating to the jury? He will agree that a sizeable minority of people, among whom I number myself, oppose the death penalty. As some members of any jury are likely to be drawn from that number, what are the chances of anyone being found guilty by a unanimous verdict?

Sir Ian Percival: That problem is not new. It has always been with us, and it existed when juries tried murder cases when we had the death penalty. The answer is that no one with very strong views either way should sit on the jury if it can be avoided, and judges have ways of indicating this to those who are liable to serve. *[Interruption.]* I gave way to an old friend, but from now on I shall do my best to follow your wishes, Mr. Speaker, and, in the interests of brevity, to resist the temptation to deal with every point, let alone with interventions.

The other main question is whether we should have the death penalty even in such a limited area. Here again let me get rid of some of the generalities. This is not a debate about hanging. I deplore the way in which that word is continually used to send shivers down people's spines. We are debating whether or not we should have the death penalty. If the new clause is accepted, every hon. Member will agree that there must be careful consideration of the most humane method. There is much loose talk about brutalising, but I am probably the only hon. Member to have spoken to the executioner. He is a constituent of mine and a less brutalised man it would be hard to find.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the debate is about the death penalty, is it in order to raise the conviction of Mr. Hindawi for a crime for which he could not have been hanged even if the proposed new clause had been law?

Mr. Speaker: It is for every hon. Member to make his own speech and I do not intend to interfere in that.

Sir Ian Pecival: I was merely giving an instance of a case in which the jury would have had no difficulty in deciding that what had been done was evil.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Ian Percival: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Clay: What about the Birmingham six?

Sir Ian Percival: Next, some suggest that one is civilised if one is against the death penalty and uncivilised if one is not. That is a most arrogant assertion. There is no need for the death penalty in a civilised society—but first find a civilised society! To suggest that those of us who support the death penalty are uncivilised is a great impertinence —and very pompous. There is a word for it in Yiddish, "chutzpah".

I shall continue to resist the temptation to deal with every point that is raised, but I intend to deal head-on with the three matters which I know are of most concern to people who are really interested in this issue — the special problems regarding terrorism, particularly in relation to Northern Ireland; whether capital punishment is a deterrent; and the risk of executing an innocent person.

I intend the new clause to apply to terrorism, including terrorism in Northern Ireland, exactly as it applies to other kinds of killing of such a heinous nature as to come within the provisions of the clause.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Bill, which has been before the House for some time, does not apply to Northern Ireland. Moreover, Northern Ireland does not have trial by jury. I am not trying to make a funny point. I am concerned about Northern Ireland. Given the nature of the Bill, how could the new clause apply to Northern Ireland?

Sir Ian Percival: It would, of course, have to be applied by means of another provision. I am simply stating frankly that I intend it to apply across the board in an attempt to grasp a nettle about which I know that people feel strongly.

Some will say that we cannot execute terrorist killers in Northern Ireland—a part of our own country—for fear of the consequences and that we must therefore reject the death penalty for all other killings, even those carried out by international gangs. I agree that we must be consistent and that if something is to be done it must be done across the board, but I disagree with the conclusion that I have just described.

The killings carried out by the IRA are among the most cold blooded, savage and brutal even in this evil world. Members of the IRA use the death penalty to punish their own people, to deter them from committing what they consider to be crimes and to ensure that they obey orders. They also use it against members of organisations which oppose them, and against the public to deter them from exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms. The common element of all of that is that of deterrence. Why, then, should we ourselves not use the death penalty as a punishment and a deterrent for them?

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The new clause refers to convictions

"by the unanimous verdict of a jury".

How can that apply when there is no jury?

Sir Ian Percival: I am coming to that. I must be firmer in resisting the temptation to deal with each intervention as it arises. I will deal with these issues in my own time and in my own way. The House will find that I shall not seek to duck any matter of importance.

We are told that we should not use the death penalty because it would create martyrs. I echo the view on this expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) on previous occasions and his attitude to it when Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. But I add this—if there is anyone who believes that the killing of a father in cold blood in the presence of his wife and children is the stuff of which martyrs are made, we should tell such people exactly what we think of them and not cringe before them. It is further said that if we dared to threaten to execute we would be faced with reprisals and that hostages would be taken and killed. That is as good as saying that we dare not do it. I believe that we have to say, unpleasant as it is—as we have said to many a thug in the past—that if it is right, necessary and proper to do something, we dare do it. It is not something to be said lightly but we cannot duck it, particularly when we are talking about our own country.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not know exactly where we are in relation to this. If carried, this will apply, as I understand it, to England and Wales, not to Scotland or Northern Ireland. Even if it were carried, therefore, it would be necessary to have consequential amendments, obviously in the other place——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a matter of order for me. The hon. Member takes up a great deal of time and I am anxious to call as many Back Benchers as possible. I cannot answer questions like that.

Mr. Heffer: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I may be taking up time but I have to inform you that you are responsible for the conduct of business. I am now going to ask you again: if this is carried, will it or will it not apply to Scotland and Northern Ireland and then what will happen about getting it to apply? How would we proceed?

Mr. Speaker: That is a question which should correctly be put to the right hon. and learned Member who is moving the new clause.

Mr. Heffer: He cannot do it.

Sir Ian Percival: I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that both you and right hon. and hon. Members will appreciate that the more inverventions of one kind or another that there are, the longer it may take to make the points which I want to put across. I hope that the House will bear that in mind.

The hon. Gentleman is quite right. It would be necessary for these provisions, if carried, to be extended. I am merely looking the problem straight in the eye and emphasising the need for consistency.

I have already answered the point about fear of reprisals, but I would add that when we do not have the death penalty we have convicted terrorists on our hands in prison for life, with the consequent threat that hostages may be taken and may be killed. I have no doubt that the present Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will disagree with what I am saying. I greatly respect their views, both as individuals and as holders of those important offices. However, I am comforted in taking a different view by the fact that at least one previous Home Secretary, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), and one recent Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne, have expressed different views. I also bear in mind that in our debate in 1983 there were those who, as they said, were at the cutting edge, and who expressed different views.

I am aware of the impossibility of having a unanimous jury verdict in a country where there are no jury trials, but I am not dealing with how the legislation would be applied. I refuse to duck the issue. There were those in the last debate who said that they did not agree, that there could not be juries. My point is that we must make provision for enforcing our law throughout our own land. The proposition that we cannot do what we believe to be right, proper and necessary to protect life in our own country because of threats from criminals of what they will do in retaliation is simply unacceptable.

Turning to deterrence, I would like first to put it in its proper context. Any judge in considering sentence has to have in mind at least four considerations. One is punishment—and I sometimes think that some hon. Members leave that one out. We cannot leave it out. It is one of the essential elements of sentencing—and there are many who believe not only that there should be punishment but that it should bear some relation to the crime. Another element is prevention, to ensure that the offender is, as far as possible, prevented from doing it again. A third element is the effect that the sentence would have on the rehabilitation of the accused—of course it is—and the fourth is the deterrent value of the sentence. The sentence itself is, however, only one of the three elements of deterrence. The first is the fear of being caught, the second the fear of being convicted and the third the fear of what will happen after conviction.

Let me get rid of some of the wilder statements. Some people have said recently that there is overwhelming evidence that the death penalty does not deter. That is nonsense. Others have said that the statistics give no support for the proposition. Of course they do not, because the only people who appear in statistics are those who have not been deterred. The ones who have been deterred never become part of the statistics, nor do the potential victims of their crimes, thank God.

I ask the House to look at the question from the point of view, first of all, of common sense and then from the point of view of the evidence that we have had. It is simply flying in the face of reason to say that the fear of death will not deter some people. It is a total fallacy to say that because it does not deter everybody it would not deter some. One might just as well say that life imprisonment does not deter anyone because it does not deter everyone.

Perhaps I could here remind the House of one aspect of the sentence of life imprisonment. If it means what it says—and unless it does it is not much of a deterrent—it is a fierce punishment. It means locking up a person for the rest of his natural life, killing him off at whatever speed it takes him to die. One might even ask if it is any more humane. Of course, those who oppose the death penalty suggest that if we ask convicted criminals which they would rather have they will choose the second. So they would, almost invariably, but surely that only serves to

[Sir Ian Percival]

confirm the view of those who agree with me that the vast majority fear death more than they fear life imprisonment. That is why they would rather have life imprisonment than death. So it is a greater deterrent to those who can be deterred, not a complete deterrent but demonstrably a greater deterrent than life imprisonment. That leads in my view to but one conclusion.

I would also ask the House to look at this in the light of some known facts. Since 1964, when the last execution took place, the total of murders and section 2 manslaughters has gone up from 85 to 238. Some say "That is not too serious, some 70 per cent. of those murdered are killed by someone whom they knew." That is a strange proposition. It could be just as nasty to be killed by a friend. But even if that is so, and even if one discounted all those, the increase in the others, the professional crimes, I find very disturbing and significant in this context the fact that it has happened since abolition.

I find it also the more convincing when taken together with two other facts. Right hon. and hon. Members will know that in 1965, when we were talking about abolition, the police said that professional criminals did not carry firearms because of the risk of their killing someone and losing their own lives. Indeed, the police said that so strong was the fear—the fear of death—that before criminals went on a job everyone was searched and if someone was found to have a gun he was out of that gang for ever. The police said that if the fear of death was taken away, those vicious men would carry guns which they would use, primarily to terrify, but if necessary to kill. That stands to reason because if someone is faced with 30 to 35 years in prison for armed robbery, if apprehended, what has he got to lose by killing the person who might apprehend him?

Every single word of what was said to us then has come about. In 1972, the first year for which we have figures, there were 254 offences in which a pistol was used; in 1985 there were 1,390 such offences. The same applies to all other firearms used in armed robberies. The same applies to the carrying of knives. That seems to many of us to be a clear indication that life imprisonment is not as powerful a deterrent as the fear of death. Following the removal of the fear of death we have seen a rise in violent crimes generally in which weapons are used and an increase in the number of deaths.

The second point turns on a point made frequently by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) who speaks with such authority on these matters. He is quoted and relied upon by the Howard League on this. He has said:

"Ninety seven per cent. of homicides are cleared up."—

and I say immediately that that is a fine record. He continued:

"That is the best deterrent."

But surely that is disproved by his own words.

The deterrents are said to be the fear of being caught, the fear of conviction and finally the fear of the penalty that will be received. What my hon. Friend's figures show is that, although there is a 97 per cent. chance that the person who kills will be caught and convicted, such people are not deterred by the prospect of life imprisonment. Surely the right inference to draw is that if those concerned thought that there was a 97 per cent. chance of being caught and convicted, and then losing their lives, that must surely be a greater deterrent, not to all but to a substantial proportion.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Surely the alternative to what my right hon. and learned Friend has just said is that most of these crimes are committed by people who do not think rationally about the consequences, which is why his ultimate penalty would be of no value.

Sir Ian Percival: I have already conceded that there are some who will not be deterred by anything. I am talking about those who can be deterred. I do not accept that there are people who cannot be deterred. In respect of those who can be deterred the conclusion to be drawn from my hon. Friend's proposition is in my view the opposite of his.

The third point, which is the one that has given me most concern over the years, is the risk of a mistake. I have always regarded with horror the possibility of anyone being wrongfully convicted of anything. For anyone in the House to be wrongly convicted of the theft of £5 would be dreadful. I view with horror the possibility of a mistaken conviction resulting in an innocent man or woman being locked up in prison until he or she dies, and that is a risk that we take now, I view with even greater horror the possibility of an innocent man being executed because, as has been rightly said, there is no way of putting that right.

Mr. Fairbairn: Yes, there is—the royal pardon.

Sir Ian Percival: I am sure that every person who has ever taken part in a trial in which a person's life was at stake must have shared my view and must have taken every conceivable care to see that a mistake was not made.

I think that there is great exaggeration about the assertions as to mistakes that have been made. Many of the allegations are I think ill-founded. Nevertheless, I accept that there is a risk, and that there always must be, but that is not, as so many seem to think, the end of the matter. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen thought that that was cheapening the debate, they may think that I was being a bit offensive, but that is what I think.

5.15 pm

There is, in fact, no course open to us that does not entail the risk of death for innocent persons if mistakes are made. What we have to weigh against the risk of executing an innocent person if we have the death penalty is the risk that other innocent persons will lose their lives if we do not have the death penalty. I refer to three categories. A number of people have been killed by those who, having murdered, were sent to prison and later released. I was surprised and horrified to hear that the total for the past 20 years is 33; that is, the lives of 33 innocent people have been lost because of mistakes. I do not criticise those who made the mistakes. It is easy to be clever with hindsight, but the fact is that 33 people who could still be alive lost their lives because of mistakes.

There are those who are at risk from those convicted of murder, such as prison officers and other prisoners. There are those innocent people who are at risk if, as we believe, the death penalty really is a deterrent and we deny the protection of that deterrent to our citizens. I conclude that, on balance, the risk that innocent people will lose their lives through mistakes is far greater if we do not have the death penalty than if we have it.

Lastly, I want——

Mr. Peter Thomas (Hendon, South): Before my right hon. and learned Friend finishes, will he clear up one matter which has disturbed me? I have listened carefully to his speech. Does he wish us at the conclusion of the debate to vote for the principle that he has enunciated in his speech, that capital punishment will follow only when there is a unanimous verdict by a jury that a reasonable person would feel that the killing was evil, or does he wish us to vote for the terms of the new clause? I am sure that he has considered its terms. If he reads it, he will see that any interpretation by a court of those terms would mean that there are two categories of capital murder. If we are to vote for this, are we not voting for the proposition that

"A person convicted by the unanimous verdict of a jury of the premeditated killing of another person . . . shall suffer death in the manner authorised by law"

or the alternative, which is that

"A person convicted by the unanimous verdict of a jury of . . . intentionally killing another person in a manner, or for a reason, or in circumstances which a reasonable person would consider to be evil, shall suffer death in the manner authorised by law."

There are two categories. If we are to vote for——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt but that is a very long intervention.

Sir Ian Percival: My right hon. and learned Friend, who is an old and valued friend, cannot have been present when I dealt with that point at the start of my speech. If it means what he says—and I am not sure that it does—it can very easily be put right by adding the four words "in either case done". My answer is simple and I am surprised that my right hon. and learned Friend should seek to deal with it in this way; it is a drafting point. If, in fact, it is capable of—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Ian Percival: If, in fact, it is capable of having the effect that my right hon. and learned Friend said, I would be the first to wish to remedy it by putting in those words. I am asking the House to vote for the principle that has been perfectly adequately summarised by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Finally, I want to say a word about the significance of public opinion in these matters. I hold as firmly as anyone else to the view that we are not delegates but representatives. I want to quote from something said by my right hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) with which I agree. He said:

"I should be the last to imply that a Member of Parliament ought to subordinate his judgment of what is wise or right to even the most overwhelming majority of opinion. If he believes a thing harmful, he must not support it; if he thinks it unjust, he must denounce it. In those judgments the opinion of those he represents has no claim over him."

I agree with every word, but I also agree with what he went on to say, which was this:

"But capital punishment is not for me in that caterogy: it is not self-evidently harmful, nor self-evidently unjust. I cannot therefore deny that in this context a settled and preponderant public demand ought to be taken into account or that at a certain point it would have to prevail."

He then said that he did not think that that point had been reached at that stage. But that was 12 years ago. I would also remind the House that the Royal Commission in 1953 said:

"The continuing demand for retribution cannot be ignored".

Hon. Members will have had a lot of correspondence on this matter. I had a letter from an elderly gentleman living in Brixton who, in substance, asked, "Don't they know up there" — he meant us — "that we are more frightened now of violence from our own people than ever we were of Hitler? Don't they know that we believe that there is one thing that they could do to help and protect us? Don't they know we feel that they are putting our lives at risk to ease their misguided consciences?" That is just one example of what has been written to me. I could cite many others.

The figure for public opinion is now said to be about 85 per cent. in favour. That means — and the House should recognise this — that one cannot say that it is just the cranks or extremists at either end. It means that the solid bulk of moderate, middle-of-the-road thinkers in this country believe, and believe strongly, that we are not doing everything that we ought to do to give them the protection to which they are entitled. To those hon. Members who continue to vote against, I must say that I believe that the stage has been reached—or is very close—where if this House continues to ignore public feeling it will do so at its peril.

I commend my new clause to the House as something which has the support not only of logic and reason but of the vast majority of those for whose lives we are responsible.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The House has listened to the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) with the respect and attention which his views and experience always command, and also with a sense of the peculiar responsibility which falls upon each of us and which he rightly emphasised. This is a matter which for many years Parliament has taken to itself. By that I mean that hon. Members make up their own minds about their vote and then justify that vote to their constituents. It follows that policy decisions by Government, advice from Whips, statements in party manifestos, have no place in this discussion. Only Parliament can change the law, and on this matter Ministers come to the debate simply as individual Members of this House.

Nevertheless, there is a convention that the holder of my office should try to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. By that convention, the Home Secretary gives some factual background, attempts some analysis of the actual proposal before the House and, finally, adds something of his own personal views. I shall follow that convention this afternoon. I shall do so briefly, to allow other hon. Members to contribute.

Last year there were 3·8 million recorded offences in this country. Of that total, just over 3 per cent. were offences of violence against the person, and of that 3 per cent., 7 per cent. involved violence endangering life. So offences of violence endangering life constituted 0·2 per cent. of the total number of recorded offences. The rise in recorded crimes of violence including homicide has been substantial, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, but it has been markedly slower than the rise in recorded crimes against property. However, it is of course natural and right that crimes of violence should arouse the strongest feelings of anxiety, frustration and anger. An hon. Member's position on capital punishment is not a test of his or her resolution on crime in general because there is no evidence, either in the figures or from the experiences of other countries, that the existence of capital punishment

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

for murder — that unique offence at the pinnacle of crime—has any effect in deterring or reducing crime in general. The House will want to concentrate, as my right hon. and learned Friend has done, on the relationship between capital punishment and murder itself.

Probably the least questionable statistics are those showing the number of offences initially recorded as homicide per 100,000 of the population. The number of homicides per 100,000 population reached its peak in the 1860s and 1870s, then began to decline in the last quarter of the last century and the first sixty years of this century. The high point in the figures was 1·96 homicides per 100,000 people in 1865 and the low point was 0·57 in 1961. Since then the trend has moved upwards again and last year there were 662 homicides in this country, amounting on the same basis to 1·33 per 100,000 of the population.

Against that background, it might be useful to say something about the three main justifications advanced for the return of capital punishment, which were all touched upon by my right hon. and learned Friend. They are the arguments based upon public protection, upon just punishment, and upon deterrence. As regards protection of the public, there can really be little argument. If the sole aim of justice in this regard was to ensure that in no circumstances could anyone found guilty of murder commit that offence again, capital punishment provides that assurance. As Queen Elizabeth I said in an earlier age: "Stone dead hath no fellow".

As regards the argument of just punishment, it is true that very many people in this country regard death as the only fitting penalty for some cases of murder. The argument is that anyone who, by a conscious and deliberate act done from evil motives, takes the life of another has forfeited his own right to live. A crime which is so final and irremediable in its effects is believed to deserve no less final and irremediable a punishment by way of retribution. I hope that I am stating the argument correctly. Against that there is the counter-argument that the state is less likely to instil an absolute respect for the life of its citizens if it chooses to include the taking of life among the instruments of its penal code. The conflict between these arguments is essentially something which every Member will have to resolve for himself or herself. We each have to decide whether the death penalty is the only penalty of sufficient severity for certain cases of murder.

Perhaps I should remind the House that since we debated this matter a change has come over the nature of life imprisonment, which under present law is the mandatory penalty for murder. This change is the result of the policy announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) in 1983. Since then, in all but exceptional cases, those convicted of the most heinous forms of murder — murderers of police or prison officers, terrorist murderers, sexual or sadistic murderers of children and those who murder by firearm in the course of robbery — will all serve a minimum of 20 years in prison. Under that policy, in a number of cases life imprisonment will and does mean precisely imprisonment for life.

5.30 pm

I turn now to the question of deterrence. The House will not be surprised to know, and my right hon. and learned Friend clearly said, that the figures and the research are really not a great deal of help to either side of the argument. For example, the figures for homicides and executions in England and Wales show no pattern that is of much use in settling the question. In 1903, for example, there was the largest number of executions in this century, but in 1904 the homicide figures rose. At the end of the last war, there was a rise in the number of homicides by more than a third. This was followed by 20 executions in 1946, but there was still a rise in homicides in 1947.

On the other side of the argument, 23 executions in 1952 were followed by three years of decline in homicides, but after that there was a further decline in homicides even though the number of executions was lower than ever before. International comparisons show no big difference in the incidence of homicide between those countries with the death penalty and those without. Even a study of the impact of the halting and then the reintroduction of capital punishment in a number of states in the United States of America over the last decade provides no firm guidance. Therefore, we are really left, as my right hon. and learned Friend was left, to make our own judgment on the importance of the deterrent argument.

About half of homicides arise out of a quarrel, a wish for revenge, or loss of temper. In almost 75 per cent. of each category, the victim knew the suspect. Perhaps that kind of murderer is less likely to be deterred. For the rest, the House will reach its own conclusion about whether any deterrent effect from capital punishment outweighs the possible reduction in the conviction rate which seems to go with capital punishment.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): By drawing on his own experience, does the Home Secretary not agree that, however terrible and despicable the crimes of the terrorist, such people are not likely to be deterred by capital punishment? Bobby Sands and others demonstrated that they did not place too much value on their own lives.

Mr. Hurd: I am suffering from the same problem as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport in that the hon. Gentleman is raising a point that I intend to cover later.

I should now like to speak about my right hon. and learned Friend's new clause. First, there is the question how widely it should apply in the various parts of the United Kingdom. That matter has been raised but not settled by interventions. The Bill applies generally only to England and Wales, and the House will have to consider whether it would be right to have capital punishment available in some parts of the United Kingdom but not in others. In this context we have to think particularly about Northern Ireland, the part of our country that has suffered most tragically from terrorism.

As has been said, my right hon. and learned Friend's proposal could not as it stands be applied to terrorist murders in Northern Ireland, since there is at present no jury in such trials in that part of our country. My right hon. and learned Friend said that he would like it to be applied throughout our country. I understand that reasoning, but his proposal could not be applied in Northern Ireland without some fundamental change in its nature. If I may say so, my right hon. and learned Friend has not helped us a great deal about what that fundamental change should be. Nevertheless, his proposal

is clear—although we are not clear about its meaning in the absence of jury trials in Northern Ireland—that this should apply throughout the United Kingdom.

The House may remember that when it last debated this issue in 1983, my predecessor, as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), made clear his considered judgment that the return of capital punishment would make it more difficult to bring terrorists to justice, would strengthen their support and would destabilise society in Northern Ireland. He added that the professional judgment of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, after consulting his senior officers, was that to reintroduce capital punishment for terrorist murders would make the task of the police in Northern Ireland substantially more difficult.

I thought it right to consult my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He has authorised me to say that his firm advice is against this new clause. He has asked me to say that in England and Wales during the four years from 1983 to 1986, six people were convicted of crime which could be classified as terrorist murder, and one of the murder of a police officer. During the equivalent period in Northern Ireland, the figure was 94. My right hon. Friend's view—I accept that my right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) holds a different view—is that in the main the terrorist is fully prepared to risk his own life as well as to sacrifice the lives of others. Up to the end of last year, for example, more than 330 members of the IRA had been killed in the present campaign, and, in my right hon. Friend's view, there is no convincing argument that the additional assistance of the death penalty would be any significant deterrent.

My right hon. Friend thought it right again to consult the Chief Constable of the RUC to see if he maintained his previous view. Sir John Hermon confirmed that he did and that his opinion had been, if anything, reinforced by recent experience. This view was shared by his senior colleagues in the RUC.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend hazard an explanation about why, on the day in December 1985 when we debated the matter of terrorist offences meriting death, the leader of the IRA threatened that if this House were to pass the motion on capital punishment and if it were reintroduced he would take the lives of two British soldiers for every one in the IRA who was hanged? Why should he have done that, unless he feared capital punishment?

Mr. Hurd: I shall deal with my analysis of that point and the impact of capital punishment on the IRA. I shall answer that point towards the end of what I have to say. I am reporting the views that I have obtained from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who at present holds the responsibility for making that assessment.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): My right hon. Friend is always fair. Just as every hon. Member is equal before his conscience and his constituents, so too is the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland one man in this matter. My right hon. Friend will therefore want to remind the House that the representative body of the overwhelming majority of Royal Ulster Constabulary officers who have to face this at the sharp end take a contrary view and support my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival).

Mr. Hurd: In my experience that is certainly true, and it is also true that hon. Members from the province of Ulster hold different views. No doubt some of those hon. Members will express their views in this House. I am simply speaking about the professional analysis of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who holds the principal responsibility for making the assessment that I have mentioned.

If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Chief Constable are right and if their view is accepted, and if we continue to rule out the possibility of reintroducing capital punishment for murder in Northern Ireland, we ought to consider carefully what might follow from having it in operation in Great Britain and not in Northern Ireland. Not many hon. Members would think that that is a sensible conclusion, and I agree. If within the space of a week or so similar outrages were carried out in Belfast and Liverpool, it would not be right or even comprehensible to provide, as this new clause in its present form would provide, that those brought to justice should face capital punishment on one side of the water but not on the other.

I shall now turn to the effect of the new clause in England and Wales. As he explained, my right hon. and learned Friend is seeking to avoid the difficulty of classifying different types of murder by putting the onus for decision on the jury. In doing that he follows the line advocated by the Royal Commission in 1953, although that was widely criticised and not acted upon at the time. He also follows the special procedures that are used in several states of the United States of America.

It is a very heavy burden that my right hon. and learned Friend is proposing to put upon a jury. It is a heavier burden than was placed upon the judge when capital punishment was mandatory. It is also heavier than the responsibility placed upon the Home Secretary of the day, who was not, as the jury would be under the new clause, obliged to reach a positive decision to send a murderer to his or her death. The presumption then was that the law would take its course.

Under my right hon. and learned Friend's clause, a random group of jurors would not only be asked to decide beyond reasonable doubt about guilt or innocence; in addition to that finding of fact, they would be asked to make a moral judgment about evil. The House will wish to consider whether out of those moral judgments—case by case, jury by jury — are likely to emerge results sufficiently consistent to command public confidence. For example, as has been pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison), it would seem at least likely that on a large proportion of juries there would be one committed opponent of capital punishment. Such an opponent might well agree on a verdict of guilty on the point of fact, but might never accept a moral judgment abour the nature of evil that would lead the defendant to execution. It is possible that whether executions took place would depend not on the nature or the degree of evil of the offence, but on the views of one or two members of the jury.

Our criminal justice system rightly places a heavy weight upon juries—we discussed that last night—but the House should be clear that what we are considering

[Mr. Hurd]

here is something additional and different. The results of seeking this second decision from a jury would certainly be unpredictable, and therefore less likely to act as a deterrent. They might also vary remarkably from case to case, and that would be deeply unsatisfactory to people on both sides of the argument. It is a revolutionary step to ask a jury to pass from findings of fact to findings of moral judgment. The criminal would have no means of knowing what the outcome might be.

Mr. Fairbairn: Do my right hon. Friend and the House appreciate that, following last night's debate, however frightful or evil a murder may be, whether the defendant lives or dies will depend on a peremptory challenge?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. and learned Friend is confusing two points, one of which was settled in the House last night. However, I see the link that he is making between those two points. I am not sure where that leaves his argument.

I understand clearly why my right hon. and learned Friend has made his proposal in this form. He wants to get away from the argument about different categories of murder, because in the past it has bedevilled the case for restoring capital punishment. However, in steering clear of that difficulty, he runs into another difficulty with the jury. The dificulty becomes inevitable once we move away from the simple notion that everyone convicted of murder should be executed. Few people today would hold to that simple proposition regardless of the circumstances of a case. Yet, having moved away from it, no one has yet found a satisfactory means of answering the crucial question of who should be executed and who should not.

Not all the arguments of either sense or morality point in one direction. There is a swirl of discussion in which each of us must find his or her balance as best we can. Let me mention three arguments—one of which relates to Northern Ireland—which weigh heavily and personally with me.

5.45 pm

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport spoke, as he is entitled to do, about public opinion. I do not believe that the present strong public support for capital punishment would last very long if the death penalty, in whatever form, were re-established. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) has just reminded us, in his fine biography of Sir Anthony Eden, how public opinion was disturbed by actual cases during the last years of capital punishment. Many of us remember vividly the case of Craig, who pulled the trigger and killed a police officer but was spared because he was under 18—whereas Bentley, who did not pull the trigger, was hanged, because of the fatal words that he uttered on the scene. That trial has always stuck in my mind. I wonder how long the public would continue to support a system that, whatever its form and its legal framework, would be bound to throw up that kind of anomaly and inconsistency.

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): Surely the main point about the Craig and Bentley case was that Bentley was an accessory both before and after the fact.

Mr. Hurd: I do not see how that phraseology alters the fact that the man who pulled the trigger was spared, while the man who did not was hanged. However it was phrased, such anomalies and inconsistencies would be bound to occur.

The public's view of capital punishment would also be affected by the publicity that any execution would receive from the news media, which are now much more intrusive and less inhibited than they were 30 years ago. The process by which the life of a man or woman is lost not as a result of accident, crime or war, but as a result of the cool and protracted decisions of the state is bound to be the focus of lurid publicity. What happens—as we see from the United States or, indeed, Malaysia—is that the offender, in a thoroughly perverse way, is treated as the victim. It is his sorrowing family who are interviewed, his words and actions that become famous and his last moments that are lovingly described. I do not believe that the Public would find that acceptable for long. A circus would be created, and the holder of my office, because he would still be the guardian of the prerogative of mercy, would be cast as the ringmaster.

My second point refers back to what I have said about terrorism, and the point raised by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). Of course terrorism is not confined to Northern Ireland, and what I say now reflects the total application of the clause. Whatever its leaders may say for tactical reasons, I am pretty sure from my own time in Northern Ireland that, if we really want to help the Provisional IRA to build up again the flow of dollars and guns into its armouries, the infliction of capital punishment on its members would be a good way of setting about it. The greatest single gain in strength that it has achieved in recent years came after the hunger strikes of 1981, when it contrived with some difficulty to provide corpses for its own purposes out of its own membership.

My last point rests on an even more recent experience. I spent part of the Christmas Recess looking through the papers relating to a number of people now serving prison sentences in this country for terrorist offences. As the House will know, I decided to refer one of those cases back to the Court of Appeal. It is emphatically not for a Home Secretary to say whether such individuals are guilty or innocent, but where there is new matter of substance in a case—for example, in the form of a new witness or new material bearing on the scientific evidence—a Home Secretary is justified in asking the court—indeed, he has a duty to do so—to look at the matter again. If such men had by then been executed, any review of their case would be a charade. A later finding of innocence in any such cases would leave a dark stain on our system of justice. Mervyn Russell was convicted of murder in 1976. Several years after his execution, the Court of Appeal quashed his conviction.

I do not put forward those three reasons as a Minister, but they weigh heavily with me in my attempts to find a balance between the different arguments. This is the fifth debate on capital punishment that I have attended; many right hon. and hon. Members have been in the House longer, and have attended more. My recollection, which perhaps they share, is of debates that, through sheer quality, have done the House honour. Courage, as well as clear thought, has been required of us all, and I believe that we shall fully maintain that tradition today.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): It is a little less than four years since the House last debated this issue.

At that time—five weeks after the general election in 1983—many hon. Members felt that the time was appropriate for such a reassessment. As some hon. Members put it, we had just been refreshed by our contact with the electorate. We are likely, fairly soon, to be refreshed again. Indeed, it might have been in the minds of the proponents of the new clause that, as Dr. Johnson almost put it, when a man knows that he is to be refreshed in a fortnight it concentrates his mind wonderfully.

Circumstances, however, are considerably different from what they were four years ago. First, we are not, as we were then, debating a general motion. We are debating a specific new clause that has been tabled for inclusion in a specific Bill which, if carried, would become the precise law of the land.

Secondly, the proposal is not that there should be a general return of capital punishment but that it should be reintroduced only where there is a jury trial, where the jury is unanimous and where a reasonable person would consider as evil the manner of the murder, the reason for the murder and the circumstances of the murder.

Those hon. Members who have proposed the new clause may well have drafted it along those lines to seek to make their proposition more acceptable. If there were, to begin with, any merit in their general case, it would be disposed of by the nature of their proposal as well as by the ambiguous manner in which the clause has been drafted, as was pointed out by the right hon. and learned Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Thomas).

It is for the proposers of the new clause to persuade the House of their case and of the merits of their clause. No death penalty for murder is the status quo. Those who seek to change the status quo have to provide a convincing case for that change. The new clause signally fails that test. For example, the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) said that it would apply to terrorist murders in Northern Ireland. In response to a further intervention he said that if the clause were included in the Bill he would make the necessary drafting changes to ensure that there is consistency throughout the United Kingdom. However, as the Home Secretary has pointed out, the need for a jury decision, whether unanimous or not, means that the proposed change in the law would not be generally available in Northern Ireland.

Sir Ian Percival: Both my right hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) missed one point that I made: that special procedures might be necessary.

Mr. Kaufman: It would not simply be that a special procedure would be required. An entirely different procedure would be required. The whole of the clause hangs on a jury verdict. In his new clause the right hon. and learned Gentleman says that the unanimous verdict of the jury is required and that the unanimous verdict of the jury shall take into account

"circumstances which a reasonable person would consider to be evil".

If there is no jury—and in the Diplock courts in Northern Ireland there is no jury—the unanimous verdict of a jury, or any verdict of a jury making a judgment about the evil inherent in a case, would not be possible.

This morning I contacted the Attorney-General's office—it was extremely helpful to me, and I am grateful to it for that—about the nature of dealing with murder trials in Northern Ireland. The Attorney-General's office made it clear to me that the only way in which a murder trial can take place in Northern Ireland is if it is certified out by the Attorney-General himself. The Attorney-General's office also made it clear to me that, in what its representative called "the emergency situation" in Northern Ireland, domestic murders might be certified out but that non-domestic murders—namely, terrorist murders to which the Secretary of State for the Home Department referred—would not be certified out. Therefore, it would not be a minor change of a tidying up that the right hon. and learned Member for Southport would have to provide. He would have to provide a new form of capital punishment for Northern Ireland that was not based on a jury verdict. If it were not based on a jury verdict, it cannot be denied that the safeguard that he has presumably sought to build into this new form of capital punishment would not be available for terrorist cases in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Fairbairn: If we are to deal with the unity of capital punishment for the whole of the United Kingdom, let us consider Scotland. A Scottish jury consists of 15 members and the verdict is 8:7, not 10:2. Therefore, the chances of being convicted of a capital, or an evil, premeditated crime in Scotland would be different from what they would be in England.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. and learned Gentleman points out that at least jury trial is available in Scotland, and I presume that the right hon. and learned Member for Southport is proposing that a unanimous verdict would be required of Scottish juries. If not, he would have to provide for three different forms of capital punishment decisions in three of the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom.

I say again that it cannot be denied that capital punishment would not be available for murders by terrorists in Northern Ireland, even though such murders might be regarded as evil in manner, reason or circumstances, as is provided for in the new clause. I say that they might be regarded as evil, because the nature of evil is an entirely subjective concept.

As the Home Secretary has pointed out, most murders are not committed by habitual criminals. As the Home Office statistics make clear in tabular form, they are committed in most cases by a son, daughter, parent, spouse or other family member, or by a lover or former lover, or by a friend or an acquintance. Between 1975 and 1985, those categories of murder accounted for 73 per cent. of the murders that were committed. Moreover, again as the Home Office statistics make perfectly clear, 50 per cent. of the murders that were committed between 1975 and 1985 were committed during a quarrel, or in revenge, or because of loss of temper.

Only about 10 per cent. of murders are committed in pursuit of other crime, and that proportion is lower now than it was 10 years ago. Although the number of murders has risen, as I shall point out, it is curious that the actual number of murders committed in pursuit of other crime was lower in 1985 than it was in 1975. How on earth would a jury be able to assess which of these murders was or was not evil?

In any case, such an assessment—again as the Home Secretary pointed out—is a complete distortion of the role of a jury. The role of a jury in any trial, including a murder trial, is to consider the facts of the case, and on the

[Mr. Kaufman]

basis of those facts to decide whether or not the defendant has been proved beyond reasonable doubt to have committed the crime of which he is accused. As I shall have reason to point out before I end my speech, to make a factual decision on the basis of evidence that is offered in good faith is a hard enough job. Juries, public spirited though they all are, have been known to make mistakes as to fact that have resulted in wrongful conviction. Under the new clause, the jury would have to choose the penalty. Decisions on penalties are for Parliament to make or for judges to impose. That ought not to be a job for juries, with one member having the right of veto over the penalty to be imposed, as is provided for in the right hon. and learned Member's new clause.

What is more, to impose on juries the duty to make a moral analysis whose outcome could result in the death of the object of that moral analysis is to impose an intolerable burden, particularly since there is no measure, except for an individual's personal judgment, which might well be prejudiced, as to what the nature of evil might be. Whole religions and whole methods of philosophy have been based upon an analysis of what is good and what is evil, yet the right hon. and learned Gentleman is imposing upon a jury the burden of having to make a decision in a few hours on the nature of evil and how it should be applied to a particular case and to a particular human being, a decision that might result in the death of that human being.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

6 pm

Mr. Kaufman: No, I wish to get on.

If we accept this proposition, Parliament would not only change the nature of jury trial and verdict, but it should also make every such verdict automatically liable to appeal. The basis of that appeal would not be, as it now often is, whether the judge had misdirected the jury, but whether the concept of evil in the minds of the appeal court judges was different from that in the minds of jurors. Appeals would become matters of differences of opinion, on which it is impossible for there to be any factual yardstick.

That hon. Members have put forward such an unsatisfactory formulation for the return of capital punishment for murder is a symbol of the fundamental flaws in the general case made by those seeking a return of the death penalty. To establish their case, they must prove that the absence of capital punishment fails to provide an effective deterrent for murder, such as they believe would exist if the death penalty were brought back. However, they cannot prove it.

As the right hon. and learned Member for Southport and the Home Secretary have pointed out, the statistics for murder are too insecure for any proof one way or the other. Arguments based on those statistics may be distorted by the classification of the murder and the base year that is chosen for comparison. Each year, some killings are initially regarded as murder. However, when they are pursued by the police, or dealt with by the courts, they are reclassified to provide a considerably lower total. In 1985, for example, the homicide figures in Great Britain fell by 69, solely as a result of reclassification.

Murder has certainly risen over the years, but not in a steady progression. Between 1951 and 1952, for example, when capital punishment was available, the number of murders rose by 72. Between 1976 and 1977 when capital punishment was not available, the number of murders fell by 83.

Murder is a uniquely dreadful crime, because it is uniquely irreparable. Every murder is hateful because it flies in the face of human instincts. However, it is necessary to see even the crime of murder in perspective, for example, in an international perspective. Last year, in England and Wales, 662 offences were initially recorded as murder. That figure is unacceptably high to us in this country, although it will certainly be reduced when the figures are reassessed, as they are annually. In New York city last year, the number of murders was not 662, the total for England and Wales, but in that single city 1,598. As a percentage of crime in New York city, the murder rate there is 15 times greater than that for the whole of this country.

As the Home Secretary sought to do, murder must also be seen in the context of total crime nationally. In the 20 years before abolition, murders constituted 14·7 per cent. of the more serious crimes of violence against the person. In the 20 years since abolition, that proportion has fallen to 9 per cent. In the 20 years before abolition, murders constituted 2·8 per cent. of all violent crimes. In the 20 years since abolition, as a proportion of violent crime, that figure has fallen to 0·7 per cent. As a percentage of all crime, it has fallen from 0·05 per cent. to 0·02 per cent. All crime has risen unacceptably. Murder has risen far less than other crimes, although every murder is one too many.

Hon. Members proposing the reintroduction of the death penalty have yet to prove—so far they have failed to do so — that, if reintroduced, capital punishment would have a deterrent effect on potential murderers and assist in improving the Queen's peace.

Mr. Lawrence: Will the right hon. Gentleman answer or try to answer a question that I asked the Home Secretary? I remind him of it. If capital punishment had been reintroduced and the leader of the IRA threatened us by saying that he would take the lives of two British soldiers for any member of the IRA who was hanged, would not that clearly suggest that, to the IRA, capital punishment is a deterrent?

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. and learned Gentleman has intervened precisely when I was seeking to deal with that matter. I shall proceed as I was about to do, and hope that if my reply does not satisfy the hon. and learned Gentleman at least it will respond to his point.

Since hon. Members who are proposing the new clause probably rule out, by the criterion of evil, three quarters of the murders that take place each year, we have to ask what would be the impact of the reintroduction of capital punishment on the remaining quarter, among whom, presumably, the hon. and learned Member for Burton includes murders by IRA terrorists. Presumably, those hon. Members would include murders committed by terrorists, although — I repeat that it is important to make this point—the requirement of the presence of a jury would exclude all terrorist murders committed in Northern Ireland. Therefore, the leader of the IRA could bluster in vain because his members would not be faced by

capital punishment in Northern Ireland, where most of the terrorist murders that are committed in the United Kingdom take place.

In the case of executions of terrorist murderers, the state would be faced with an enormous dilemma. I shall deal with the point that the right hon. and learned Member for Southport sought to make. Have those hon. Members considered, with any seriousness, the effect on the Queen's peace of reintroducing capital punishment for terrorist murders, even if it were possible adequately to define such murders in law? I ask the hon. and learned Member for Burton, how could capital punishment act as a deterrent among groups of people which include some—although not all—who actively seek death as martyrs?

Capital punishment is an ugly form of killing, but it is less gruesome than the death by slow starvation, which was deliberately sought and attained by the hunger strikers in Northern Ireland who deliberately killed themselves. How could capital punishment act as a deterrent to men who actively seek death, glory in it, and become martyrs after achieving it? One of them was an hon. Member of this House. As the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland could point out, that man's name is not only remembered in Northern Ireland, but is already part of folklore and song.

It is quite certain that executions of members of terrorist groups would lead to reprisals. Indeed, the hon. and learned Member for Burton made that point himself. When hostage taking has become an international disease and the prolonged disappearance of Mr. Terry Waite is, tragically, no longer even a regular news item, how can we be sure that the sentencing to death in Great Britain of any terrorist from Northern Ireland or elsewhere would not lead to hostage taking as a means of preventing the imposition of the penalty? If the capital sentence were imposed, it would result in the murders of innocent hostages, misnamed as revenge executions.

Sir Ian Percival *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I shall give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman when I have finished this point.

In the case of such executions, not only hostages, but the judge, prosecuting counsel and jurors involved in the case would be at permanent risk. The right hon. and learned Gentleman says that we should not be deflected from doing what we regard as right. He and his associates propose that we do something wrong, knowing the consequences in advance, because they believe that it would be right.

Sir Ian Percival: The right hon. Gentleman misquotes me entirely. Let us leave aside for a moment the question whether it is right or wrong and assume that society concludes that it is right, proper and necessary to do something. His argument leads to the conclusion that, even if the threats were sufficiently severe, society should not do this. That is simply unacceptable.

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. and lerned Gentleman is assessing the position incorrectly. When a Government come face to face with these matters, grand words in the House of Commons must be set aside in order to try to save human life. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) is sitting two rows in front of the right hon. and learned Gentleman. When the right hon. Gentleman was Prime Minister, he had to face just such a dilemma when Leila Khaled landed in this country. It is easy to propose a new clause; it is different to be the Prime Minister or Home Secretary in a Government who must face these matters and seek either to negotiate out or to get rid of the object of danger to one's citizens from the country. The state would almost certainly be faced with a terrible dilemma of either doing a deal which would lead to the reprieve or even the release of the killers or seeing more innocent people killed, possibly in a country outside its jurisdiction, such as a country in the middle east. The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned the Hindawi case. Does he believe that, if Hindawi had been sentenced to death, hostages would not have been taken in the middle east and the Government would not have had to deal with that predicament?

The proposals in the new clause must also deal with the potential deaths of other innocent people, namely those wrongfully convicted of murder who, if this proposal had been law, might have been wrongfully hanged. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he did not duck that question, but he did not deal with it. At best, he dealt with it in a cursory fashion. This is not a hypothesis; several people are alive today who were convicted of murder and might well have been hanged if capital punishment had existed. Martin Goodwin was convicted of murder in 1969 and his conviction was quashed in 1972. Patrick Meehan was convicted of murder in 1969 and his conviction was quashed seven years later, in 1976.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No. I have already given way to the hon. and learned Gentleman once and I must proceed.

Geoffrey Mycock was convicted of murder in 1969 and his conviction was quashed in 1984. Patrick Murphy was convicted of murder in 1970 and his conviction was quashed in 1972. Cooper and McMahon were convicted in 1970, three appeals were dismissed in 1974, 1976 and 1978 and they were granted special remission in 1980 because of doubts about their guilt. John Preece was convicted in 1973 and his conviction was quashed in 1981. Albert Taylor was convicted in 1974 and his conviction was quashed in 1978. Mervyn Russell was convicted in 1977 and his conviction was quashed in 1983. All those men might have been hanged if the new clause had been law at the time of their convictions.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: In dealing with criticisms of the new clause, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that if there was a defect it could easily be put right. I have listed nine defects and it was possible belatedly to put them right, but if the death penalty had existed every one of those men might have been dead. A posthumous pardon would have done them as little good as the posthumous pardon from the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) to Timothy Evans when it was finally bestowed.

Two further cases are in doubt. The first case relates to the three men convicted of the murder of Carl Bridgewater. The Home Secretary, to his credit, has reopened their case. Secondly, there is the case of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974. The Home Secretary, again to his great credit, has referred their case to the Court of Appeal. If any of those nine men are found to have been wrongfully convicted it will be possible to release them, but if the new clause had been law

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they might have been hanged. Therefore, if the new clause had been law at least nine men might have been hanged because they were wrongfully convicted and a further nine may yet be included in that category.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels *rose*——

6.15 pm

Mr. Kaufman: Can hon. Members who propose this change in the law face the prospect that their vote at 10 o'clock tonight may result in the deaths of innocent people? I hope that none is callous enough for that.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I do not base my present absolute opposition to this proposed change in the law only on statistics, the danger of reprisals or even the established and repeated fact of mistaken conviction: I base my opposition to capital punishment not on what it does to those executed, but on the injury which it inflicts on the whole of society. Its very presence debases and barbarises society. As the Home Secretary pointed out, the debasement is exacerbated by the morbid appurtenances of judicial killing, such as the interviews with the families of the convicted, the scenes outside the prison as the time of execution approaches and the poisoning of the national life during that period. If it is wrong for an individual or group of individuals to take another human being's life, as I believe it is, it is wrong for the state to do that with the additional torture of the weeks of waiting and anticipation.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No. I wish to conclude my remarks because many other hon. Members wish to speak.

If Britain restores capital punishment we shall double the number of countries in non-Communist Europe which practise it. Our sole companion would be Turkey. We would also be in line with the Soviet Union. That is why prison governors and assistant prison governors, faced directly with the consequences of capital punishment, have said that they will resign if it is reintroduced for murder.

Hon. Members may say, "What about the victims and their relatives?" At present, we have in mind an ugly, vicious murder — the murder of PC Blakelock at Broadwater Farm. Only 12 days ago, his widow was questioned about the possible punishment for her husband's killers and she said unequivocally:

"Not the death penalty, I don't believe in capital punishment."

If that brave woman in all the tribulations of her cruel bereavement can see so clearly and assess so dispassionately, surely the House of Commons can make an equally clear and dispassionate assessment.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth) *rose*——

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride) *rose*——

Mr. Kaufman: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Dr. Miller: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the sentiments expressed by PC Blakelock's widow were expressed by my relatives when an aunt was killed and Meehan was sentenced for it?

Mr. Dickens: On the same point——

Mr. Kaufman: There is a justifiable horror of killing and there should be an equally justifiable horror of judicial killing or killing by a jury, as provided in the new clause. I shall vote against the new clause and I hope that the House will do the same. There is something morbid and unhealthy about the wish to return regularly to a subject on which the House has stated its opinion with great clarity so many times. Let us get rid of it tonight once and for all.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I am grateful for the opportunity of making what I hope will be a short intervention in the debate.

On each of the occasions over the last 20 or more years in which the matter has been debated I have voted against capital punishment. I intend to do so tonight. Nothing has happened since the last debate on capital punishment, which was opened by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardiner), to change my view in any way. My hon. and learned Friend said that his debate would probably be the last in the House on this subject. In some ways I had hoped that he was right; not because those of us who are opposed to capital punishment are reluctant to face any challenge, but for another reason, which is that it detracts from the effort which is required to consider the real nature of crime and to try to find better ways of reducing it.

Every one of us wants to minimise crime, but in the last decade there has been all too little thought about the psychology of crime, the social reasons for it and the means of dealing with it. Rab Butler devoted a great deal of time to these problems before he was Home Secretary as well as when he was Home Secretary. We began to feel that we were making progress. Since then we have had very little time, money or attention paid to the subject. That is why I regret that we constantly return to the subject in this way.

There is an automatic desire to debate corporal and capital punishment. Yesterday we had corporal punishment. Many of my hon. Friends referred to their times at public schools, the beatings that they received and expressed their desire that it should be widely extended to the whole electorate. I did not have the benefit of attending such a school. I have always admired the intellectual excellence of some of the leading schools, but it has never appeared to me that their disciplinary methods have led to a greater human understanding by those who suffered them. That is the past, that was yesterday. Today we are dealing with capital punishment.

We are dealing with legislation at this point. This is not just a general discussion about a motion in which views can be expressed; we are dealing with a specific new clause to a Bill before Parliament. It is from that point of view that we must examine it. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) pointed out, this clause is in no fit state to become part of our legislation. There is an argument between the lawyers as to whether there are two categories in the clause or only one. The highest legal advice that I have had is that there are at least two categories and that the question of premeditated killing is separated from the other questions of the reasonable view of a jury. We, as the House of Commons, cannot put a clause with that duplicity into our legislation. Whatever the public may think about capital

punishment or the lack of it, they would think that we were ruefully incompetent to put such a clause on to the statute book.

Sir Ian Percival: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: Therefore, I must urge the House, from that point of view, not to accept this new clause.

Sir Ian Percival: I am interested that my right hon. Friend and others are making such a meal of this. If there be an ambiguity, it can be put right perfectly easily by the addition of four words. We have another House for that purpose. I would be the first to add those words. That point is no argument against the principle of the Clause.

Mr. Heath: I hesitated to give way initially only because I thought it might be more worthwhile to give my right hon. and learned Friend a general give-way at the end on all the points that I make rather than on particular instances.

Are we not entitled to expect that he and his right hon. and hon. Friends, when putting forward a new clause to the House, would at least have removed ambiguities and not said what the House must do is wait and see what the other House does about it? The other House may want two different categories; we do not know. So we have no opportunity of settling that for ourselves.

The other aspect is the application of the Bill to England and Wales or the United Kingdom as a whole. This is a basic point. As a House we are surely not entitled to include in a Bill that applies to England and Wales a measure which my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport says that he wants to apply to the United Kingdom. In other words, even those who want the restoration of capital punishment must recognise that this is no means by which to restore capital punishment in this country. On that basis alone the clause should be rejected.

I want to support most strongly what the Home Secretary has said in his analysis of the situation. We have had cited the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1947, which is 40 years ago, the Royal Commission in 1953, which is 35 years ago, and it is now time capital punishment, having been abolished for nearly a quarter of a century, for there to be a re-examination in the light of abolition over a quarter of a century. Then we would have some basic evidence on which those who want to can form their judgments and change their views. It is not possible to ignore the intervening period of nearly a quarter of a century in which capital punishment has been abolished.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport said, in regard to Northern Ireland, that we must not take any notice of the consequences. I believe that he is profoundly mistaken. My Government abolished capital punishment in Northern Ireland because we knew that it was not conducive to a better situation, it was worsening the situation, and that was why we asked Parliament to take that decision. I face up to my right hon. and learned Friend quite frankly. What the IRA was doing was demonstrating what we all knew — that if we implemented the powers of capital punishment it would make the situation worse by the executions that it would carry out. My right hon. and learned Friend is entitled to say that, but we all knew it beforehand.

Mr. Lawrence: Why did he say that?

Mr. Heath: Because it is a matter of fact. We all know what the IRA would do if we attempted to carry out judicial executions in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lawrence: Why?

Mr. Heath: Because it is in the nature of terrorism that it will do it.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The IRA kill anyway.

Mr. Heath: Yes, and it will kill even more if we try to implement judicial executions in the province of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: It is a major deterrent.

Mr. Heath: Let me come to this question of the deterrent. None of the figures show that it is a deterrent, but when my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport said that we must ignore the consequences and do what is right he was denying his own argument. His argument was that it was a deterrent. It was a deterrent as one of the consequences and we are being asked to take notice of it. Therefore, he is entirely contradictory in his own arguments. What he cannot show is that it is a deterrent, and when he says that if things get worse we are to ignore it then he is, first, denying the reason for the death penalty, and, secondly, he is ignoring the results of the death penalty, which must be the main basis on which he is asking for it to come back. In that respect his argument is not only contradictory but fallacious.

As to the remaining aspects of the penalty, as I said before, I have been grievously worried about the question of mistakes. I cannot share the view of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport that we balance up mistakes in which the state kills innocent people with other citizens who are killed by individuals committing a wrong.

Sir Ian Percival: We do in a war.

Mr. Heath: We are not in a war. My right hon. and learned Friend is a lawyer. Have we declared war? *[Interruption]* Really. What a statement!

Sir Ian Percival: It seems my right hon. Friend has declared war on me.

Mr. Heath: I do not only rely on the BBC; I watch ITN as well. I was not aware that we were in a situation in which my right hon. and learned Friend can produce that sort of argument. There still exists the power of treason. Nobody believes that it will be used in peace-time for one moment, as long as capital punishment does not exist elsewhere. When it comes to mistakes, I am horrified that anyone can say that they do not matter as long as there is more or less a balance between the mistakes and the innocent victims of killings. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that that is one of the most powerful reasons why we should not acknowledge the reinstitution of the death penalty.

6.30 pm

The clause would make unsuitable legislation. Some right hon. and hon. Members desire to reintroduce the death penalty, but it must be done by proper means. There must be produced a proper clause that can be justified in legislation that applies to the entire United Kingdom. Alternatively, it can be done by means of a debate in which general views are expressed on a motion that calls for the

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Government to introduce legislation. That is how the House should behave. The introduction of the new clause is not the way to carry on in dealing with the vital issue of life and death for those who have committed offences and for innocent people.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport concluded by saying that unless we reinstitute capital punishment the electorate will have no time for us. Indeed, he said that we would fail to reintroduce it at our peril. I disagree with my right hon. and learned Friend. Capital punishment was abolished nearly 25 years ago, and since then I have not noticed that the House has been at peril. I have not noticed that those who have supported the abolition of capital punishment have been at the peril of the electorate. I hope that no one will be influenced by what my right hon. and learned Friend said about being at the peril of the electorate if we throw out the new clause.

The new clause asks us to deal with a moral question. My right hon. and learned Friend said that he was introducing a new approach, but, with great respect, it is not new. This is an attempt to secure capital punishment for a particular form of murder instead of the general form. This proved a failure with the Homicide Act 1957, which was an attempt to arrive at a compromise, and, as he said, it failed. This is but another attempt by means of the back door to introduce into legislation a particular classification, and, similarly, it would fail.

We cannot ask juries to make moral decisions of the sort that would face them if the new clause became part of the Bill that in due course will become an Act. We cannot ask juries to decide what is evil and what is not. What would be the position of a Moslem juror who was faced with a defendant accused of blowing up an aircraft to bring pressure on a country which is a tyrant towards his, the Moslem's, fellow citizens in another part of the world? The Moslem would take the view that that was not evil. He would say that it was good and sanctified by Allah. What is his position on a jury? The jury system would be made impossible. A potential juror cannot be excluded merely because he happens to be a Moslem.

Sir John Farr (Harborough) *rose*——

Mr. Heath: If the new clause were passed, we would be asking jurors to make judgments on morality and idealism, which they should not be asked to do. I know that some judges use the phrase, "This was an evil man" or, "This was an evil crime", but it would be better for us all if judges adhered to the law, commented only on the law and excluded from their remarks phrases likely to gain approval in the gutter press.

Sir John Farr *rose*——

Mr. Heath: There are those who say that certain incidents on television may incite the young to commit crime. They must be aware that there is mass coverage of every sort of crime by a part of the press. The first items to be dealt with by local radio stations throughout the country are about crime, not the world situation, our economy or other major issues. This must be inciting psychopathic personalities to commit crimes. I return to my original argument that we have done far too little to study the impact upon our fellow citizens of the media, the gutter press and the comments that are made from judicial benches.

Sir John Farr *rose*——

Mr. Heath: I have nearly completed what I have to say but I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Sir John Farr: My right hon. Friend has said, properly, that we are discussing a new clause that, if accepted, would become part of the Bill. May I remind him that clause 30 enables those who are found to be carrying a firearm, and not necessarily using it, to be sentenced to life imprisonment? If a criminal can be sentenced to life imprisonment for carrying a firearm, and there is no further deterrent for using one, he will have the inducement to use a weapon. That is why the new clause should be supported.

Mr. Heath: I do not agree with that view and I cannot accept it. It does not deal with the arguments that I have advanced that turn on the ambiguity of the new clause, its limited application within the United Kingdom and the consequences of mistakes for us as Members of Parliament.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will do what they believe to be right when the House is divided at 10 o'clock. They will not be at the mercy of the electorate, which understands that those of principle reflect their views by their votes in the House. I hope that the new clause will be thoroughly defeated.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead) : I am glad to be able to take up the remarks of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). I do so with almost complete agreement.

There is nothing novel about the debate, except for the form of the new clause. The Home Secretary made a speech of notable courage and clarity, especially when he set out strikingly what with modern conditions of publicity would be the almost inevitable swing of sympathy to the condemned man awaiting execution, and the effect that this would have on general morbidness throughout the country. Modern media methods would be applied to a far greater extent than the methods of more than 20 years ago were employed when the last executions took place.

The form of the new clause, if not the debate, has a certain novelty, but novelty is not always a virtue, and I do not think that it is with the new clause. It is not difficult to see the general motive for the novelty and the reasons for the form that it takes. The general motive is a rather desperate attempt to find a method — almost any method — that will persuade the House to accept the death penalty in some form, and it seems hardly to matter what that is. Its purposes are to try to divide murders into two degrees while avoiding the illogical catalogue of criteria which made the Homicide Act 1957 almost entirely unsatisfactory in everyone's view.

The method of making everything depend upon a judge's or jury's view of the meaning of "evil"—perhaps one of the least objective words in our language—can hardly be regarded as a triumph of precise draftsmanship. The second particular purpose of the new clause is to try to deal with the objection to death by majority verdict. There are grave difficulties. I assume without question that the sponsors feel that they have, perhaps regrettably, to avoid Northern Ireland and to make the Act not apply to it. The new clause does not refer to Northern Ireland, but if it were carried any Government would have to deal with the consequences and produce some consistent law throughout the United Kingdom.

I assumed that the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) was prepared, against his will, to exclude Northern Ireland because I could not conceive how he could fix his clause upon having a unanimous verdict in the United Kingdom and then, across 60 miles of sea, in part of the United Kingdom, to state that one could proceed without a jury.

This is difficult territory. The House may recollect that, in 1983, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) fell into a trap on Northern Ireland from which he had great difficulty in extricating himself, then or for several years afterwards. He did not advocate bringing back juries, but advocated, in a vague sort of way, that perhaps one could have two judges sitting together or perhaps a judge sitting with assessors. That cannot be regarded as remotely on all fours with the insistence upon a unanimous verdict in Great Britain and not accepting a majority verdict.

Sir Ian Percival: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. As I have said, I am a little surprised that such a meal has been made of this. I accepted that one must be consistent. I did not think it was acceptable to have the death penalty here, but not in Northern Ireland. I did not think it was acceptable that we should be prevented by threats from doing what we wanted. I said that special procedures would be necessary. They were discussed in the 1983 debate. There were those who said that juries could be returned to Northern Ireland and there were those who said that a unanimous verdict of three judges could be accepted. I believe that the right hon. Gentleman should reconsider what he said about my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan)—I considered what he said was rather admirable.

Mr. Jenkins: No, not at all. I do not wish to go back over what was said by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, but I believe that he put forward a singularly ill-thought-out proposition when Home Secretary and bearing in mind his responsibilities. The right hon. and learned Member for Southport has made a similar proposition, but at least he does not have the responsibilities of Home Secretary or any similar responsibilities.

The right hon. and learned Member for Southport does not recognise that there is an almost insoluble problem. Whichever way the right hon. and learned Gentleman moves to deal with it, he gets into almost impossible difficulties. The first difficulty is to state that one must have a unanimous verdict in Great Britain, but to proceed without a jury elsewhere. Secondly, if one returns to jury trial in Northern Ireland and abandons the Diplock courts, one can say goodbye to the majority of convictions for terrorist offences. Undoubtedly, one would make a symbolic, retributive punishment almost certainly counter-productive with regard to the safety of life. One would face allowing many terrorists, otherwise incarcerated, to be acquitted and to walk free to assassinate again immediately. Such considerations make the constant return to this subject look more in the nature of an obsession than a policy.

If it is proposed that the sponsors do not accept capital punishment in Northern Ireland—that is the logic of the decision to gear the sentence of the death penalty to the unanimous verdicts of juries—what do we do about terrorism in Great Britain? In Northern Ireland, the threat to life by terrorism is 600 times as great as it is in Great Britain. If there was capital punishment in Great Britain but not in Northern Ireland, one would have a position of proclaiming a unique, effective deterrent, but drawing the sword where the threat was least and sheathing it where the threat was greatest. What sort of policy is that?

If one was to have the death penalty for what might be called civilian murders, but not for terrorism, on what possible basis of logic is the criterion of evil to be applied? One of the features of the new clause is that its two arms inevitably run head-on into each other — the evil criterion and the unanimous verdict of the jury.

6.45 pm

This is an ill-thought-out mish-mash of a clause. It is contradictory. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made an effective case against the use of the death penalty in terrorism cases, and I shall spare the House a rehearsal of that argument. I accept that it is a powerful argument, especially in the Irish context, given the psychology or the psychosis of the Irish terrorist.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) constantly popped up and said that he could not understand why the leader of the IRA should say that, if the death penalty were introduced and terrorists hanged, he would murder two British soldiers every time it was carried out. The hon. and learned Gentleman said that that surely proved that the leader of the IRA was in deathly terror of the death penalty. The hon. and learned Gentleman failed to understand that, given the extraordinary psychosis of terrorism, a man like that wants a mounting total of death on both sides. That is exactly what would occur—a multiplication of threats and a reduction in safety.

Mr. Lawrence: The significant point is that that threat was made to the House on the day of the debate on capital punishment. Why should the leader of the IRA bother to issue such a threat unless he thought that his ranks would be deterred if capital punishment were introduced?

Mr. Jenkins: If the leader of the IRA or whoever made the threat thought that he would change the minds of those right hon. and hon. Members and others who had been dedicated to capital punishment, in season and out of season, he was extremely mistaken.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Jenkins: I gave the hon. and learned Gentleman an anwer. Surely he behaves a little better in the courts, or he must get in trouble with the judges.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Jenkins: I will not give way.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Jenkins: I believe that the change in the law that made majority verdicts possible has had considerable value. I introduced that change in the law in 1967 against considerable opposition from, as it happens, most of the Conservative party. It has worked well and is responsible for about 10 per cent. of convictions. Those are concentrated on the more serious and professional criminal cases. I would not like the position wherein

[Mr. Jenkins]

majority verdicts were held to be good enough for some forms of conviction, but not for others. I would not like the position in which someone was held in prison for 20 or 30 years or their entire life on the basis of a verdict which, by a clause passed by the House of Commons, discriminated between verdicts and said that a majority verdict was not good enough in all circumstances. I believe that that would dangerously undermine the validity of majority verdicts. That is part of the wider case that has convinced and influenced many senior police officers against the death penalty. They see it as the enemy to a likely conviction.

Mr. Dickens: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jenkins: No.

If we reintroduce the death penalty, the conviction rate for murder will almost certainly go down. We must remember that the alternative to conviction is acquittal — the man does not go to prison, he walks free. Of course, if that man is innocent we want him to go free but, for the moment, I am considering the guilty.

However, one cannot discuss the reintroduction of the death penalty without contemplating the position of the innocent, or the possibly innocent, who are charged and convicted. It is not my view that it is majority verdicts that are peculiarly unsafe. It is my view that the frailty of human judgment, whether expressed through majority or unanimous verdicts, is too great to support the finality of capital punishment. My view has been substantially strengthened since 1983.

During my two periods as Home Secretary, I had to deal with 10 capital cases in which there were varying degrees of doubt, some quite simply amounting to wrongful conviction. The right hon. Member for Gorton mentioned a substantial number of other cases that have occurred since 1976. The people involved in the 10 cases I had to consider were not all hanged, but two were, and more would have been had the death penalty not been abolished in 1965. I already thought that that was an unacceptably high proportion, but events that have taken place since have greatly compounded that view. For example, grave doubts have arisen recently in regard to the safety of the verdicts in both the Birmingham and Guildford bombings cases. There were six convictions in one case and four in the other. Incidentally, all were convicted by unanimous verdicts. There was one majority verdict in the associated but separate Maguire possession of explosives case. All 10, or perhaps more likely nine, could have been hanged if the death penalty had been in operation.

Looking back on previous debates, I discovered that in the 1974 debate when I was talking about wrongful conviction, I was interrupted by a Conservative Member, no longer with us, who said, "That does not apply to terrorists." I was half inclined to agree with him and I said that I would deal with terrorism later. That is a classic answer, not only for trying to defend the continuity of one's speech, but for disguising that one does not have an immediate answer to the point put to one. How wrong he was, and how half wrong I was.

Clearly, the Home Secretary believes that there is considerable doubt in the Birmingham case, or he would not have announced its referral to the Court of Appeal. I am sure that sooner or later he will have to do the same in the Guildford case, and it ought to be sooner rather than later. What a monstrous addition those nine or 10 people would have been to the already unacceptable level of people falsely or doubtfully convicted in capital cases. How, in view of that, anyone can believe that the case in favour of the death penalty has strengthened since 1983 I find it difficult to imagine.

The only difference is that we were then on the morrow of a general election and today we are on the eve of a general election. I do not believe that that will make any difference to more than a handful of votes in the House. This is pre-eminently an issue on which the House owes the country its independent, honest and unfettered judgment and it owes it the duty of importing perspective into the issue, in looking at and learning from the past, foreseeing possible consequences in the future and not merely reacting to the emotions of the moment.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I am honoured to follow the speech of the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) who altered the jury system in 1967.

I support the new clause that has been introduced with clarity by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), and I believe that the death penalty is a deterrent. I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) because I do not think that there is any reason why this clause should not be included in a Bill that already contains similar clauses imposing life imprisonment for certain firearms offences, such as clause 30, and it is an appropriate time to do it. We have tried many times to introduce it, but without success.

I have tabled two amendments. The first is about unanimous verdicts and the second is with regard to terrorism. I am a little perplexed. I am not sure that the alteration in the jury system made by the right hon. Member for Hillhead would not apply to this clause. Unless we alter the law, I think that the courts—nobody in the House and no official can tell one the answer—might well interpret it as being in accordance with the right hon. Gentleman's modifications. I do not know whether I have the right hon. Gentleman's support on that, but it is for the courts to interpret that if the clause is accepted.

On majority verdicts, it is impossible to know whether all or even one of the 12 jurors are committed to the abolition of the death penalty. If one juror is committed to the abolition of the death penalty, then the whole thing becomes a farce. However, if the right hon. Gentleman's alteration is applied the composition of the jury is changed. There is another alternative as suggested in my amendment (a): the majority vote. I understand that that is the law in Scotland.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport has said that the provisions of the clause would include acts of terrorism. I object to the fact that it does not apply to Northern Ireland and would require special legislation in order to cover terrorist actions. I have had an early-day motion tabled for about 15 years advocating that the death penalty should be imposed for terrorists and people who assist in terrorist actions both in this country and elsewhere. With amendment (b) it would be difficult to extend the clause to Northern Ireland without complicated legislation. Therefore, although I support the clause it would be inconsistent to have the death penalty in one part of the United Kingdom and not in another.

However, Northern Ireland was once in a similar position. For a time, it had the death penalty but we did not have it here. We would be faced with a grave problem but I do not think that it would be insoluble. I would like to see the necessary legislation imposed so that it affects Northern Ireland as well.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): The hon. Gentleman's right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) explained why his Government introduced abolition for Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman seems to be inconsistent in what he is now saying.

Dr. Glyn: The Government introduced it in Northern Ireland for reasons with which I do not agree. With respect, that is my argument. I did not want to see it remain in Northern Ireland because it was right. The acts of terrorism would be reduced considerably if we had the death penalty. If we asked the police or the military——

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Dr. Glyn: I shall finish, if I may. The death penalty would decrease violence in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman bases his argument on the idea that terrorism would be reduced in Northern Ireland. Where is the evidence for that? Will he bear in mind a point that I made earlier in an intervention in the Home Secretary's speech: that terrorists and those who were accused of terrorism were willing to sacrifice their own lives, and were in no way deterred by the possibility of dying as a result of a hunger strike. That played into the hands of the Provisional IRA.

Dr. Glyn: That argument will go on for ever. In my view, capital punishment is a deterrent, and would be in Northern Ireland. I suggest that public opinion is behind us and that if there were ever a referendum in this country, the death penalty would be reintroduced.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) set an admirable example of brevity. If all hon. Members do the same, I shall be able to call a great many of them.

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): The right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), in moving the new clause, spoke of the significance of public opinion. That is the argument with which I want to begin. It is a strong argument that we have to meet when we discuss the return of capital punishment for any category of murder. That has always been the case and the debate today is no exception.

It is suggested by many, both inside and outside the House, that the public wishes the return of the death penalty, as the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) said. I tend to think that perhaps that is the case, and that the majority wish for that. The return to judicial killing would be regarded as a mark of determination by the House to deter the criminal. Such symbols have a powerful attraction. I submit that they are of little benefit when they do not actually produce the required result.

Over a long time, I have read as much as I could about the matter and listened to what others have had to say, but it is hard to find any substantial evidence to suggest that judicial killing is an act that deters. I do not doubt that the death penalty deters some potential criminals, but it does not deter others. There is no real statistical evidence for believing that there is a clear correlation between the murder rate and the existence or otherwise of the death penalty. To me, it is incumbent on those who take the view that the death penalty should be reinstated—because life imprisonment and the present level of punishment do not deter — to show that capital punishment would deter further. The onus of proof is on them. Because it cannot be proved one way or the other, it then has to become a question of one's own personal judgment.

The second argument with which we must deal is that of retribution. I find it difficult to deal with those who demand retribution, because of the sheer single-mindedness of that approach. There are those who believe that murderers should be executed irrespective of the consequences of that decision.

7 pm

The retributionists today, as on other occasions when we have had such debates, will not find much difficulty in arriving at their decision, all the more because of the emotive wording of the new clause—the word evil, and all that it implies, is used in the clause. For those who seek retribution there will be no problem in supporting the clause.

For my part, I do not believe that revenge and retribution are the business of Parliament. No one has greater respect for this House and its procedures than I, and I am firm in my belief that the business of Parliament is justice and the protection of the innocent. It is justice in the form of harsh punishment for the guilty, and justice in protecting the lives of the innocent and the values of our society. For me, retribution can never have, and I believe should never have, a place in the deliberations of a Parliament in a civilised nation.

My third and major argument is the question of selectivity. Selectivity is spelled out in the new clause and lies at the crux of it. Those who do not believe in judicial killing are not being asked to throw their convictions overboard. In fact, what is taking place today is that they are being persuaded to make their convictions flexible.

It has been suggested by those who tabled the new clause that it is reasonable to adopt a flexible attitude to the capital crime. During my years of service in the House I have spoken in a number of debates on this issue and there have been persuasive arguments seeking to apply the death penalty for acts of terrorism. I have learned this afternoon that this applies also to them. There have been persuasive arguments on other occasions for the death penalty for the killing of police and prison officers on duty. On each occasion, we have been asked to be flexible in applying the capital sentence to various groups of individuals.

Today, the right hon. and learned Member for Southport and his supporters have gone one stage further. They are suggesting that we should give authority to the courts to act in a selective and discriminatory fashion in determining the degree of evil that is associated with the act of murder, in that 12 jurors in unison are required to discriminate between murder that is more heinous and murder that is less heinous. So, in this discriminatory fashion, the death penalty can be applied to acts of a more evil nature, and that is left to the discretion of the jury.

Many hon. Members are far more familiar with the workings of the law than I. They have acknowledged, today and in earlier debates, that to restore selective

[Miss Betty Boothroyd]

judicial killing will present the courts with enormous problems. We know, from experience and from evidence that is sent to us from time to time, that attempts to implement legislation that distinguishes between different types of murder have been unsuccessful. We also know from some of the most eminent people in the judiciary that earlier legislation produced anomalies, despite the years of study and examination in attempts to define different types of murder.

The new clause will create chaos for those applying the law. It makes the jury system unworkable because it demands of jurors a subjective judgment in defining evil. This House must face reality. From my point of view, all murder is evil. So far as the House is concerned, either we have the death penalty for all types of murder or we do not reinstate it. We must be honest and have the courage to say that. That is the issue that is before us yet again today, and we cannot duck it. We cannot ask jurors to distinguish between, and be flexible towards, one act of murder as opposed to another. For those who commit outrageous and evil acts there cannot be any shred of sympathy. They must be met with long, tough sentences and I make no bones about it. I make no bones about the fact that I welcome the practice of committal for decades and conviction for life.

My final argument, which was mentioned earlier, is about the democratic process, because it brings into conflict individual conscience and what I regard as majority opinion. The first question put to me in the election campaign in Nelson and Colne, when I was the candidate following the death of Sydney Silverman, was on that issue. It was an emotive period, and to some extent I was unsuccessful because of my convictions as an abolitionist. Since first being elected to the House, I have consistently demonstrated my opposition to judicial killing, although in all honesty I cannot say that all my constituents are aware of my views. But I take the view —I believe that my constituents share it with me—that I am not a mandated delegate, and this is not a delegated assembly. I owe respect to the people whom I represent for their point of view. I also owe them my judgment in seeking what is right and best for the country in its entirety.

It would not only be wrong in itself, but wrong in the interests of the nation, to reinstate capital punishment on the basis of public opinion. That opinion I must face and convince. If I fail, my views and I can be rejected. It would be intolerable if I were to allow public perception rather than convincing argument to blow me away from the opinions that I hold. The right hon. and learned Member for Southport, in introducing the new clause, was far from logical and far from convincing. I find the new clause extremely misleading and confused. I shall demonstrate that in the Lobby tonight.

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd). She will find that I am equally forthright in my opinions and as content to stand by them. I hope to take up her remarks on deterrence and the point of view of the public, but first I should like to refer to the suggestion by the right hon. Members for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), that somehow it is a mark of a degraded and uncivilised society to consider the reintroduction of the death penalty. I shall hardly take lessons from a former Home Secretary who was responsible for introducing the permissive society——

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): You fool.

Mr. Miller: I said at the beginning of my speech that I am confident of my opinions and I am prepared to stand by them. I shall continue to do so.

What causes me greater anxiety than the gratuitous slur which the two right hon. Members sought to introduce and which spoiled their arguments, which were until then stated in a perfectly logical fashion, is the suggestion which, unfortunately, has crept in on both sides of the House, that somehow capital punishment cannot be considered for terrorists because of the consequences. I hope that the Minister of State will take the opportunity, when replying to the debate, to restate the position of Her Majesty's Government on not giving in to terrorists' demands, and not being deterred by terrorists' threats from carrying out the policy to which the Government adhere, never mind capital punishment in that context. The spirit that infused some of the remarks that we have heard can only be described as craven.

Mr. Fairbairn: The consequence of the death penalty in the 17 cases when I defended a person on a capital charge was that people were wrongly acquitted. The consequence was that they went out and murdered somebody else. The consequence of the death penalty being abolished is that, with the 500 people whom I have defended for non-capital murder, the jury has not had that difficulty. Two were wrongly convicted and both were pardoned—Preece and Meehan. If they had not been, they would have been wrongly hanged by us.

7.15 pm

Mr. Miller: My hon. and learned Friend's forensic record is well known to the House, but he has not assisted me in my argument about terrorist offences. I now wish to return to the main point that I wanted to make. I should like to deal first with the concept of deterrence, because it is the main reason why I support the concept of the reintroduction of capital punishment.

As one of the main sponsors of the new clause, I must accept liability for any defects that may have been found in its drafting or its uneven effect. I am happy to accept the criticism that has rightly been made in the House today, but it should not be allowed to detract from the principle at stake. I admit that the new clause was a device to get the principle of the reintroduction of capital punishment re-examined. Were the new clause to be passed, I still cannot believe that it would be impossible for it to be dealt with through Lords amendments.

I wish to refer to the principle of deterrence and the role of the public. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) rightly stated that the main deterrent is to be detected. I pay tribute to the work that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and his team have done in equipping, paying, raising the morale of and employing extra police to improve the chances of detection. I also pay tribute to them for the legislative measures that they have passed in the teeth of the Opposition, such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, to improve matters considerably in that major respect. We should not get the idea of capital punishment

out of all proportion. It is only part of the deterrent. The most important part is some of the work that my right hon. Friend has undertaken.

However, the concept of the deterrent is well established in the public consciousness. The purpose of the deterrent is not to be used but to deter. That is the concept that underlies our defence policy. It is an applicable analogy. We are attempting to introduce and further the same concept of deterrence. It is widely understood and accepted by the public. It is easy for hon. Members with abilities that sometimes are better than those with which I was endowed at birth to pick holes in arguments but lose sight of what the public are concerned about and their attitude. The public are well accustomed to the idea of a deterrent and have been encouraged in that by our Government, I am glad to say.

If the public really believe that capital punishment is a deterrent, as it seems to me they do from my travels round the country on by-election duty, it is reasonable to suppose that some of the criminal fraternity among the public also find it a deterrent. The limit of my ambition is to increase deterrence. That is what I am trying to do. It is important. It is all very well to win the argument in the House, but I do not find people going outside the House and campaigning for the views that they hold here. If they are sincere in their beliefs, a real educative process must be undertaken to sway the public — and perhaps educate the public — to their view. They must change the perception of the public. The reason why the matter has cropped up again this evening is not some perverse, atavistic, degraded thirst for blood and retribution among Conservative Back Benchers— [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, it is."] No, it has nothing to do with that. I am not interested in retribution. I will not be accused of that.

The reason for this debate is the wide concern among the public that there should be an increased deterrent for the increasing number of crimes of violence and murder. That is why we are debating the subject tonight. It crops up again this evening because of public demand, and we must discuss the matter. Although we are not delegated, it is right that we should discuss the matter in this House as representatives.

I accept that the new clause may be defective and may not be in a fit state to be passed by the House. However, I make no apology for discussing the matter and for putting my point of view. I sincerely urge all hon. Members to take very seriously the point about public perception and the public wish. If there must be a process of re-education, would hon. Members please undertake that process if they are opposed to the measure?

I have found that there is a very real wish for increased deterrence and a very widespread understanding that the reintroduction of capital punishment would help to achieve that end. That is why I will be supporting the new clause tonight, whatever its defects.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I am probably the only speaker in the Chamber tonight who lives in an area where there is capital punishment. The distinction that we are talking about in Northern Irish terms is capital punishment on the one hand and capital punishment as part of the judicial process on the other. I live in a part of a very small island which has suffered the deaths of approximately 2,600 people. Translated into British terms—when compared with England, Scotland and Wales — that is almost 12,000 people. We can rightly say that there is capital punishment in Northern Ireland which is extra to the judicial process.

It would also be true to say that I am probably the only person in the House tonight who has been on more than one occassion under sentence of death from the people who carry out capital punishment. That is not unique to me. That is a common position for any Northern Ireland politician.

For those reasons we must be very careful tonight. We must be careful that we do not allow self-righteous indignation to carry us away, that we do not let our very sincere convictions rule our heads and above all we must not allow a ghoulish macabre self-indulgence in these matters to take over the debate.

We are all against sin. This debate should not be a moralistic beauty contest on the Floor of the House. It should be the means of solving a very serious problem. As someone who lives in the middle of probably the most dangerous part of Northern Ireland, which has seen more violence than any other part, I do not want to see any Act incorporating capital punishment. I do not want to see it even contemplated.

There has been much debate tonight about the deterrent element of capital punishment. I have one simple question to ask. If that deterrent factor exists, why have the problems of political violence remained in Ireland after 800 years? Why, in 800 years, has that deterrent not worked? It has not worked for a very good reason—and that question was put continually from Conservative Benches. Those who are dedicated to violence in the north of Ireland, be it Republican violence or Loyalist violence, are dedicated to getting the most repressive legislation that they can from this House. I refer to the words of Daniel Morrison of Provisional Sinn Fein after the horrific bombings in Brighton. He confirmed my point clearly by saying that Provisional Sinn Fein would not get the repressive legislation that it sought. If those people were sitting in this Chamber tonight, they would be wishing the new clause to be carried. If it was carried, it would not be the leaders of those organisations who would suffer. The young lad of 16 or 17 years of age on the periphery of the violence would suffer. That is where I believe the central flaw in the argument lies. That essential flaw would play into the hands of those who are dedicated to change things by violent means in the north of Ireland.

We have heard numerous references to the IRA and I condemn every act of violence that it carries out. However, let us not forget that there are other organisations on the Loyalist side in the Unionist community which are acting in exactly the same way, in a way which is reprehensible for everyone in the north of Ireland and in a way which can never bring a solution to our problem.

I will not go into the legalities of the new clause. I will leave that to the lawyers. However, having listened to some hon. and learned Members tonight, I do not believe that they have cleared the wooliness that surrounds the new clause. It is incredible that this type of legislation could only apply to Northern Ireland if there was a re-introduction of a jury system. We would enter a bizarre situation whereby, after derogating from the highest standards of the judicial process, we would have to reintroduce a jury system so that people could be hanged to cope with terrorism. That inherent bizarre proposal is central to the new clause. That is absolutely ludicrous and,

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in legal terms—and I do not speak as a legal person—that could not possibly be made to work by any remote stretch of the imagination.

Reference has already been made to the hunger strike deaths. Let us examine the implications of the new clause. Those people on hunger strike were seeking one aim—the definition of their position as political prisoners. Once such a new clause is introduced, those people would have that and a further definition of their position as political martyrs. We know the potency of the martyr syndrome in Irish politics. We know the way in which it seeps down from one generation to another and we know how the whole sub-culture of violence which is condemned as outlandish in one decade can become a source of admiration in the next decade. To play into the hands of that sub-culture of violence would be a crucial mistake if we hope to find a solution to the terrible problems facing the north of Ireland.

If we want the IRA, the UDA, UVF or the INLA—or whatever name an organisation may choose at any given time—to succeed, I recommend that the surest way to achieve that would be to hang those people. Imagine the position in a very closed community such as Northern Ireland the day the first person was hanged under this kind of legislation. Be he Protestant, Catholic, Unionist or Republican, imagine the attitudes within that community. Imagine the problems that would be caused for people living in that community. Some theories simply do not stand up. Some people say that capital punishment would be a protection for the vulnerable in society. It is not such a protection. The most vulnerable in society live in areas which would be taken over by emotion. Their areas would be laid bare by the men of violence.

Some people say that the proposal would be a body blow for violent organisations. That is not quite correct. Those organisations would be laughing all the way to their next sinister plan because they would know that the proposal was playing exactly into their hands. Those who see the death penalty as a means of creating peace and order—I do not use the term "law and order"—in the north of Ireland have only to consider the effect of the hunger strikes. Nothing created the Sinn Fein political presence so potently as what happened in those prisons. There was a cynicism and a callousness that was quite shocking, but there was also a blindness in the approach to that situation which in many ways was rooted in self-indulgence and gave those people the necessary impetus at the very time when it was needed.

7.30 pm

I conclude with the words of Winston Churchill, which were quoted by my colleague the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) in the debate in 1983, but which bear repeating. Churchill said:

"The grass grows green on the battlefield, but never on the scaffold."

Whether the battlefield be a mining village in Britain, an urban ghetto in London or the blood stained streets of Northern Ireland, I beg the House never again to allow the shadow of the gallows to cut out that light which alone can bring real peace and justice.

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that our debates on this issue had been debates of distinction which had brought honour to the House of Commons. I believe that that tradition has been continued in today's debate, with the exception of a self-righteous display of petulance and intolerance by a former Home Secretary. I was not persuaded by another distinguished contributor that debates of this kind should not be held because they distract attention from the serious matter of the handling of crime. I entirely agree that this issue, whatever one's views about it, is not central to the problem of crime because, mercifully, murder is by no means the most prevalent of crimes. Nevertheless, no one paying any attention at all to the vast quantity of legislation emanating from the Home Office when I was Home Secretary and under my successor or to the debates that have taken place in the House could possibly believe that two debates on capital punishment separated by a four-year interval have prevented the House from considering the subject of crime on a broader basis.

The House is right to debate this matter because of the public concern and interest in it, which should not be condemned as merely some kind of morbidity that decent, intelligent folk should suppress. With regard to public opinion, I agree with the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) that it is our duty to listen to what our constituents say but at the end of the day to make up our own minds. I am not sure that I agree with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that if capital punishment were reintroduced public opinion would be likely to swing against it. I do not think that that has been the experience in those parts of the United States where capital punishment has been reintroduced. Those who oppose capital punishment in all circumstances must therefore rest their views on their conscience and analysis rather than on the belief that they can accurately predict what public opinion would be following reintroduction of the death penalty as opposed to what public opinion is today.

There are those who say that it is always wrong for the state to take life. I respect but do not share that view. Others say that they would support capital punishment if it were a unique deterrent. The evidence on that point is complex. It was analysed at some length in the debate in 1983 and contributors to today's debate have gone over the ground again. In all fairness, the evidence can at best be said to be inconclusive. It does not provide a sufficient base for a decision one way or the other. Many people, however, feel that, although the evidence of a deterrent effect is at best inconclusive, capital punishment should nevertheless be restored for the most heinous of offences. As has been pointed out, in the last debate on the subject I voted in favour of the restoration of capital punishment for one particular category of murder and, despite all that has been said, I do not regret having done so.

The problem of deciding which murders are the most heinous has proved to be a formidable one over the years. Reference has been made to the Homicide Act 1957 and the attempt to found a category of murder which would be capital murder because it was committed in furtherance of theft. That is just one example of the difficulties that arise in seeking to make definitions of that kind. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) has therefore adopted a genuinely new approach, for which he deserves the respect and commendation of the House whether or not we feel able to support his proposal. He has attempted to define the most heinous of offences, which should be met with capital

punishment, not by the motive or type of crime but by an assessment of its moral quality. I have much sympathy with that attempt and I do not agree with much of the criticism that it has attracted. It is a valiant attempt but, unfortunately, I do not believe that it is viable as a legal instrument.

There is a further obscurity in the wording of the clause in addition to that which has already been pointed out and which was dealt with very fairly by my right hon. and learned Friend. He made it crystal clear that he would require the ingredient of evil to be found in the offence whichever limb of the clause was applied. That being so, I am somewhat mystified as to the need for a reference to premeditated killing as an alternative to knowingly and intentionally killing, as in my view the category of those who knowingly and intentionally kill another person must include those who commit the offence in a premeditated manner. That obscurity, however real and important though it is, is not my principal reason for reluctantly concluding that I cannot go along with my right hon. and learned Friend's new clause, sympathetic though I am to the motives of those who support it.

The more substantial problem is that the clause envisages that the test of whether the murder should be capital is whether the killing was evil, and that that should be decided by a jury. I find the concept of evil far too vague and subjective to be the basis for deciding whether a man should be deprived of his life. I will illustrate this by my own reaction, which I do not think is unique. The purpose and intention of the clause is that capital punishment should apply only to the most heinous forms of murder and that those who sponsor the new clause do not favour the general reintroduction of capital punishment. Personally, I regard any deliberate taking of life as evil, except in very rare cases such as mercy killing. On that basis, the clause would constitute a general reintroduction of capital punishment if the jury happened to share my view, which I do not think is unreasonable, that except in the most exceptional circumstances any deliberate act of killing is an evil act. Yet that is not the intention that a majority, at least, of the sponsors of this new clause put forward.

It is also said that we should not worry about the use of the term "evil" because it would all be decided on the facts of the case. That is all very well if, even if undefinable, it were possible for us to think that there was a sufficient consensus as to what was particularly evil. I suppose that the analogy to be drawn here is with the person who said that he could not define an elephant but would have no difficulty in recognising one if he saw it charging at him. But it is a false analogy, because, although the man may be unable to define an elephant, a zoologist could describe the distinctive features of the elephant in such a way that it could not be mistaken for another creature, whereas a criminologist or a moralist would find it difficult to describe the distinctive features of evil so that there could be no doubt in a given case that conduct was or was not evil.

Reference was also made by my right hon. and learned Friend to the use of the word "evil" by judges. I do not myself think it is to be criticised if judges, addressing someone convicted of a particular criminal offence, use adjectives of that kind to describe the conduct which has taken place; but while it is one thing for a judge to use the word as an adjective in describing behaviour after a verdict, it is a very different thing to use it as part of a statutory definition of an offence. The two are not at all the same. The mere fact that it is possible to refer to spectacularly horrific cases and to say, "Surely those are evil," is not an answer to this point, because it is precisely the borderline cases that are important. It is the ability to distinguish one side of the border from another which should be the touchstone of the validity of a legal definition. On that basis, this definition is fundamentally inadequate.

It is also proposed that it should be a jury that should perform this task, but that does not resolve the problem. The judge would have to sum up the case. What is he to say to the jury? My right hon. and learned Friend has said that the judge should say to the jury, "Here is the case. You have heard the facts. If you think it is evil, that is capital murder, but I cannot give you any guidance at all as to what is or is not evil." That would be a very unusual situation in our jurisprudence.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Brittan: I would rather not give way, if my hon. Friend does not mind.

It does not end there either, because the matter may then go to the Court of Appeal. How is the Court of Appeal to determine whether or not it has been right for a jury to decide that a particular case was evil to the extent to justify its being a capital murder? The Court of Appeal itself, in considering decisions, would be bound to build up a corpus of law, defining what is evil and what is not evil, in a way which would be completely arbitrary and unguided by Parliament but ineluctable in the discharge of its duties.

I have the greatest respect for the motives behind this further attempt to define those murders which should be singled out for capital punishment. I have no basic ideological objection to the task on which my right hon. and hon. Friends have embarked, but I must regretfully conclude that, valiantly as they have striven, they have not produced a proposal which is legally viable, quite apart from the general arguments with regard to capital punishment. It is for that reason, if no other, that I do not find it possible to commend this clause to the House or to support it myself.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): To some, the whole concept of capital punishment is alien. It is a moral stance and I fully understand it. Others accept capital punishment. I make no bones about the fact that I have always opposed capital punishment, for the simple reason that it is so easy to make a mistake. A mistake can be made with the best will in the world by the most honest and honourable people in the world. If it is made in a case of a capital nature, it can never be rectified.

Earlier in the debate we heard from hon. Members on both sides of the House of mistakes that had been made, of cases where people had been convicted of murder and later acquitted. Perhaps I can give just one example which comes from personal experience of a case — not a murder case—where a mistake was made.

7.45 pm

I have practised as a lawyer for some 20 years or more, as both solicitor and barrister. During that time, I have come across cases which have worried me. About 15 or 17 years ago I was asked to defend a man in a simple burglary case which involved kicking a window in and stealing a

[Mr. Gerald Bermingham]

pair of shoes—not the most serious or most difficult case. He denied the charge but was convicted. The evidence against him was glass on his shoes. He was sentenced and did three months. The magistrates who tried that case were the most honourable and honest men before whom I have ever had the privilege of appearing. I knew them personally. They lived in Sheffield. They knew exactly what they were doing. They heard the evidence and they convicted the man. A year after that conviction, another man was accused of burglary and once more it fell to my lot to defend him. He asked for other matters to be taken into consideration, one of which was the [illegible] for which my previous client had been convicted. A full investigation was made and this showed that, as the first defendant had said on the previous occasion, he was not guilty. A mistake had been made but it was one which could be rectified and compensated.

That was a case where a mistake was made by innocent, ordinary people who were trying to do their job as fairly as possible. Our system is not perfect. Juries are not perfect. In 999 out of 1,000 cases, they do a wonderful job and try their best, but with the best will in the world mistakes can be made and if for no other reason than that there is always the possibility of a mistake people like me will continue to hold the view that capital punishment is something that we cannot have in our system.

There is perhaps one other ground on which I will oppose this clause and which will lead me to vote against it tonight, and that is the way in which it seeks to place on members of the jury the onus of deciding on life or death. It introduces into our system a completely new concept. It brings the jury into the realm of imposition of penalty. All we ask a jury to do nowadays in any trial, and all we have ever asked it to do, is to decide whether the Crown has proved its case. This new clause suggests that we add a second duty. Not only must the jury decide whether the Crown has proved its case; we then tell it that it has heard the facts and must decide. We say that if it is unanimous this man or woman will live or die. What guarantee would there be that two juries in, say, St. Albans and Southampton, sitting on the same day, hearing virtually similar cases, would come to the same conclusion? There is no guarantee at all.

It is these two reasons, plus a myriad of others which hon. Members on both sides of the House have already mentioned, that lead me to the firm and unyielding conclusion that the clause should be defeated.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I speak in the full knowledge that the subject of the debate produces strong feelings both inside and outside the House. What I have to say comes from deeply held convictions about capital punishment, convictions which have not been lightly or recently arrived at without serious consideration of the moral points involved, and convictions which I believe are widely supported in the country. There have been 16 debates on the subject in the House in the past 32 years, all resulting in an abolitionist stance. The arguments for and against have been well rehearsed and are widely known. I cannot hope to do more than cover three or four of the central contentions.

I must point out what the new clause does not seek to do, and what the debate is not about. It is not about unanimous verdicts; it is not about spur-of-the-moment crimes of passion; it is not about the method of the death penalty; it is not about the fear that juries will not convict but will acquit because they do not wish to convict on a capital charge. All those matters are specifically excluded by the wording of the new clause.

It is my belief and that of those who support the new clause that capital punishment or the death penalty, whichever name we like to give it, would and will be the supreme deterrent. As evidence of this, I draw the attention of the House to the fundamental and obvious changes which have taken place in society since partial abolition in 1965 and full abolition in 1969. Recent tragic events in Tottenham, in Oldham and in Sunderland are graphic examples of the fact that the possession of and resort to lethal weapons have become commonplace in today's Britain.

It is possible to paint misleading numerical figures with statistics, but certain facts speak for themselves. In the five years up to abolition in 1965, the average number of murders in England and Wales was 290. In the five years up to 1983, the average was 590. In the 18 years up to abolition in 1965, the number of police officers killed in the course of duty was 11; since 1965, there have been 30 such cases.

More worrying is the increased use of firearms and other weapons. In the 10 years from 1973 to 1983, the number of offences involving guns and other weapons rose from 1,754 to 8,067. The number of murders arising out of the commission of other offences, usually theft or rape, rose by a staggering 73 per cent. from 1965 to 1977. Figures for the years since then show similar increases.

Of course, such rises reflect a general increase in crime. An overwhelming statistical case for the deterrent effect of capital punishment is always difficult to make. However, like many other arguments on the issue, no absolute proof can be obtained as it is impossible to calculate how many people would be deterred from carrying and using firearms and other weapons if capital punishment were available to the courts.

I should like to deal briefly with a misleading point which is always put by the abolitionists, if I may to refer to them by that name—that is, that the reintroduction of capital punishment will encourage a nothing-to-lose attitude among certain sections of the public and the criminal fraternity. Such a position already exists on the streets.

That leads me to my second point, which is to emphasise an undercurrent in my comments thus far, that murder has become commonplace. In the words of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) in the 1983 debate, crime has become a game in which it is bad luck if one loses. There are those who will argue that the absence of capital punishment is the mark of a civilised society, yet the hacking to death of a policeman or the gunning down of a security guard or of innocent people who come between thugs and their desires surely cannot be the mark of a civilised society. Quite simply, the criminal law no longer provides credible sanctions for the most heinous form of wrongdoing. Something must be done and the House should support the new clause tonight.

My third point is that the majority of people are in favour of the reintroduction of the death penalty. According to a poll in 1983, over 90 per cent. of the very large sample interviewed supported the substance of the new clause.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My hon. Friend has mentioned polls. May I draw to her attention a poll taken on Saturday by Southampton, Test young Conservatives in the centre of the shopping parade in Southampton? It showed that 69 per cent. of those polled would like a referendum on capital punishment and that 65 per cent. wanted their Members of Parliament to vote for the restoration of capital punishment.

Mrs. Peacock: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. Recently, I did a poll in my constituency by knocking on doors. I spoke to 190 people who were picked at random. Only 13 did not want the reintroduction of the death penalty, so the figures speak for themselves.

The strength of feeling in constituencies has not altered since the poll in 1983. The most frequent comment that I hear in my constituency about law and order is, "I wish the House of Commons would bring back hanging because that is what we need." If instead of the debate there was a national referendum, I have no doubt about the result; there would be an overwhelming vote for the reintroduction of the death penalty. As the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) said earlier, we are representatives, not delegates, but it is clearly the duty of each of us to reflect the feeling in our constituency and to protect the interests of constituents and their families to the best of our ability.

If people decide that their interests are best protected by having the death penalty as a sanction for murder, who are we to decide differently? Do we think of ourselves as morally superior? Is that what we are to tell our constituents tomorrow? Have we secret information which should persuade perhaps some of us to decide otherwise? I suggest that we do not. The 650 Members of Parliament are not in a position to take a paternalistic and arrogant attitude merely because of the two initials which we have after our names.

Let me remind the House that out there in the country murder and violence are not distant and unreal. The fear of them happening to ourselves, to our young children and to our elderly relatives is a constant companion. Although I recognise that there is a constant fear of a miscarriage of justice and that mistakes can be made, it has also been suggested that we might have martyrdom and hostage-taking. Already such things happen, so the decision that I should like the House to take would not have that effect.

I implore the House to take this giant step for sanity and to reintroduce the death penalty. It is high time that some hon. Members came down from the ivory tower of the House and did what the people want. At least I speak for people in England. What they want is for us to vote for the reintroduction of the death penalty. I ask the House to support the new clause.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I entirely agree with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) who said in his excellent speech that, whatever the pros and cons of capital punishment, it is a wholly inadequate instrument for dealing with crime. All the lawyers in all parts of the House have recognised the enormous contradictions in the clause. If we in our wisdom or otherwise pass it into law we will make fools of ourselves.

8 pm

I have been in the House for a long time and I remember the magnificent campaign inspired by the late Sydney Silverman. He was one of the most courageous men I have ever met, and, by his perspicacity and tenacity, he obtained the abolition of capital punishment. During my years in the House I have heard all the debates on the subject before and since capital punishment was abolished. I have always made my views clear to my constituents and I have never suffered electorally as a result of my views.

It has been said repeatedly in the debate, and it is perhaps trite to repeat it, that we come to the House not as delegates but as representative men and women, trusted to exercise our judgment on a multitude of issues and to account to our electorate for our behaviour on specific issues and on general performance. There is a great temptation for hon. Members, in the run up to a general election, particularly for those such as the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) who hold marginal seats, and especially when the result of that election is very much in the balance, to assess what they calculate to be the popular majority, as the hon. Lady asserted, on a specific issue and then, irrespective of the pros and cons, to plug a demogogic line for all that they are worth.

Mrs. Peacock: If the hon. Gentleman had checked my record, he would have found that my views were the same for many years before I came to this House. I have not changed them for electoral advantage and would not do so on such an issue.

Mr. Hamilton: No doubt the hon. Lady also promised at the last election to deal with law and order. One of the reasons why the Conservative party is sensitive about these matters is precisely that it has thrown hundreds of millions of pounds at the problem of law and order, but crime rates have got remorselessly worse. The Conservatives are seeking to convince the House and the public that one of the reasons for that is the abolition of capital punishment 20 or 30 years ago. It is all designed by those who support this clause to portray an image of toughness, virility, righteousness and morality.

As I have said, there is almost certainly an understandable sensitivity in the Conservative party about its calamitous failure to deal with the problem of law and order. I have no doubt that the new clause was carefully drafted. I can imagine the people who sponsored it sitting down at meeting after meeting carefully drafting it to cater for all eventualities. They have made a regular hash of it. It is a further attempt, no doubt sincere, to categorise murders. In this case it has to be premeditated, it must be shown without any shadow of doubt that the accused knowingly and intentionally killed, and it has to be proved that the crime could be considered evil by a reasonable person.

No one has defined a reasonable person or what is evil. If such vague absurdities were accepted, fortunes would be made by the legal fraternity arguing at great length and at great cost about the precise meaning of those terms. Lawyers and economists have one thing in common, and it is that they can never agree with one another for more than five minutes. They are paid very expensively for disagreeing with each other.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman is talking about lawyers. Is he aware that in 1983, before the last debate on capital punishment, there was a special extraordinary meeting of the Bar at which a motion against capital punishment was carried not only overwhelmingly but, I think I am right in saying, with only four votes against it?

Mr. Hamilton: I am glad to hear that. It shows that in certain special cases there can be some degree of unanimity. When they see a worthy cause lawyers can come to some measure of agreement.

Several hon. Members spoke about the absurdities inherent in the Homicide Act 1957. I was in the House at the time and I remember the attempts to categorise murder. Murder by shooting was evil — to use the terminology of this clause—but murder by poisoning or strangling was not. It was fine to strangle somebody but terribly bad to shoot him. If a person went into the corner shop and took a few sweets or chocolates or cigarettes, that was murder in furtherance of theft and was evil. However, murder done in the course of a rape was civilised and, while it was not acceptable, it was less obnoxious than robbing the corner shop.

Under that Act the murder of a policeman or a prison officer was reprehensible and evil, but the murder of a nurse, of a coalminer or even of the Prime Minister was less heinous than robbing the corner shop. All those absurdities were contained in an Act passed by a Conservative Government and they show the impossibility of trying to categorise murder.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) enumerated the number of mistakes that have ben made. With a judge or a judge and jury mistakes are inevitable. However conscientious those people might be, they can make mistakes and the death penalty is irreversible. When the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) moved his clause he spoke about this matter and reminded me of a comment by the Chancellor of the Exchequer who said that it is neither here nor there to make the odd mistake. The Chancellor said that that was in the nature of things. That is fine—provided one is not at the end of a rope. For the man at the end of the rope it is very final and a very big mistake. Such mistakes have been made over the years and that is why capital punishment is so morally indefensible.

If it is evil for an individual to take a life, it is just as evil and reprehensible for the state to take another life. That is why capital punishment is so immoral and why I think that this proposition will be roundly defeated. Let us get on with the job of really tackling the root problems of the crime rate from which we are now suffering.

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): As requested, I shall be brief. I support the new clause in the hope that it will be part of a more general enhancement of penalties for serious crimes. A few weeks ago I was reading my Sunday newspapers. I picked up a copy of the *Sunday Times* and a quite innocuous little story attracted my attention. It was about a milk float being developed by a dairy company and a local authority. The new float had metal grilles over the windows and was designed so that the driver stayed in his cab. He summoned his customers by a chime or klaxon. The milk was dispensed through a chute at the rear of the vehicle. It was in cartons rather than bottles, so that the bottles could not be used as missiles.

I had to stop and think about it. I wondered whether the milk float had been designed for some foreign, lawless society. However, I discovered that it was intended for use in this country—on some of the council estates of our capital city. That is the state that law and order has reached in some parts of the country. Everyone is now appalled by the rising crime rate. The problem is not confined to this country, but we are no exception.

In the 10 years between 1975 and 1985 murders have increased by 20 per cent.; rapes by 80 per cent.; burglaries from dwellings by 90 per cent.; thefts from vehicles by 100 per cent.; and robberies and arson by 250 per cent. In the past 25 years, the annual number of notifiable offences recorded by the police has risen by 700 per cent. At the same time, the number of crimes solved by the police has fallen. Most forces clear up about a third of burglaries from dwelling houses.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how the increase in burglaries from dwelling houses can have resulted from the absence of capital punishment?

Mr. Woodcock: If the hon. Gentleman will listen for a moment, I shall explain in the five minutes that I have to make this contribution that I want to see increased penalties for all forms of crime, with murder at the top of the hierarchy.

As I was saying, most police forces clear up about a third of burglaries. The best solve fewer than half such cases; the worst, fewer than 10 per cent. Some forces clear up fewer than 15 per cent. of all crimes, including murder, and the best solve fewer than 55 per cent.

Two weeks ago I spoke in Birkenhead, near my constituency. After I had spoken, I joined the audience, walking among the tables and chatting to the people sitting at them. At the first table that I came to, I sat down with eight elderly ladies. Within three minutes, I had discovered that they had all been burgled within the past three years, one of them in the last week. Another had her car boot broken into within the last two weeks, and another had been mugged just two weeks earlier — not in a back alley, but in the middle of Boots the Chemists in Birkenhead. Is it any wonder that such people are concerned about the rise in crime?

When I was elected, I took as the principal points of my election campaign the economy and jobs, individual responsibility, strong defence and a stronger stand on law and order. Nearly four years have gone by, and we are now approaching another general election. I am proud of the Government's record on the first three items: the economy is in good shape, people are becoming more independent and rely less on the Government to do for them those things they should do for themselves, and our defence policy is well respected and supported. However, I am not so proud of our record on law and order. Yes, we have strengthened the police, devoted more resources and built more prisons. However, that is not enough.

8.15 pm

People who commit crimes must know not only that they are likely to be caught, but that, if they are caught, they will face the severest penalties for the severest crimes. The public need to know that the punishment will fit the crime. Too often offenders leave the court laughing because of the leniency of their sentences; too often, when they do not walk free, there is a public outcry about such leniency.

There is a parallel between tax and prison, in that the Chancellor found that lowering the top rate of tax gives a greater incentive to work and thus increases the tax take. I believe that the Home Secretary would also find that

longer and more rigorous sentences would result in a disincentive to go to prison, and hence a lower prison population.

A few weeks ago, a distinguished judge, Judge Argyle, was heavily criticised for making what some considered to be political remarks. He said:

"The Government, when elected, had pledged to do something about law and order, but the Government have fallen flat on their face in dealing with the situation. Quite simply, law and order does not exist in this country at the moment. The criminals are walking all over us."

I do not agree with all of that, but I agree with the last sentence—"The criminals are walking all over us."

Judge Argyle also suggested that judges should have discretion to impose the death sentence on anyone convicted of an offence carrying a sentence of 15 years or more. Again, I do not entirely agree, but I believe that the death penalty should be available in cases that satisfy the terms of the new clause. We need to make not only the punishment but the deterrent fit the crime, and for some crimes only one punishment is a suitable deterrent.

I am tempted to be swayed by some of the moral arguments against the death penalty. I do not lightly support the call for it, However, I am compelled to think that drastic circumstances demand drastic solutions. I support the new clause because I believe that it is a necessary part of a much more rigorous approach to sentencing generally.

Essentially, sentencing is about deterrence and about protecting the potential victims—not only the victims of evil murders, who are mentioned in the new clause, but those old ladies in Birkenhead who were robbed and mugged so many times. Although it may seem trivial, I am also thinking of the people who cannot have their milk delivered to their homes because of the fear of violence against an inoffensive milkman. I am thinking of the millions of other people in the United Kingdom who are fed up with the rise in crime, especially in violent crime.

However we vote tonight, one thing is quite clear: the nation is behind the new clause. I shall do my duty to my electors, and I hope and trust that others will do the same.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I have listened with interest to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock). However, his final comment, that he would vote in accordance with the wishes of his constituents, does not conform with his mandate. He is not here simply to represent his constituents. As he knows, he is here to represent the British people. He is not a delegate, and he is not mandated. That point has been touched upon a number of times this evening, and I accept the assurance by the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) that she has made her views on law and order well known for the past few years, and that she has not been influenced by the fact that her majority is only 860.

It has been pointed out by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), among others, that we are all here to vote in accordance with our consciences. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who has been present throughout the debate, likes to claim from a sedentary position that Labour Members have been whipped tonight. That is not the case; we are voting by conscience on a free vote. That conscience is based on conviction and on the facts as we know them. Hon Members who may wish to vote in accordance with what they think is electoral gain will find that a very chilling electoral wind will blow in their direction if they do so.

Let me return to the points made by the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival). He talked of a rising tide of evil, and it was obvious from that phrase that he and his colleagues had tabled the new clause on that basis. But he also uttered the most famous words of the evening. He said, "My wording is not perfect. It may be defective, but it is easily put right." That is one of the difficulties that the House faces — that, in the first instance, we must ask ourselves whether we believe in the death penalty as the ultimate deterrent, then take the clause and come to some conclusions.

In his opening speech, the right hon. and learned Gentleman talked of the concept of deterrence, and he actually switched the concept of reasonableness from the jury to the accused. He said that a reasonable person would not commit murder, because that reasonable person would know, first, that he might be caught; secondly, that he might be tried and found guilty; and, thirdly, that he might be hanged, or be the subject of a lawful execution. It seemed to me that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was confusing the concept of reasonableness and transferring it to the accused. That is hardly so.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton said that we regret every murder and any death—

"any man's death diminishes me. I am involved in Mankind."

We take the view that the new clause does not provide a solution to the problem of how to deal with murder. In his speech, the Home Secretary referred to crimes of violence against the person and said that they amount to only 3 per cent. of all the crimes that are committed in this country. He also said that, of that number, only 7 per cent. are related to murder. We do not share the view of the right hon. and learned Gentleman that those figures are of no consequence.

He also said that, the jury would have to be unanimous. However, that was a cop-out for those hon. Members who are not anxious to exercise their conscience tonight. He was saying to them that it does not matter what decision they reach tonight; if one juror in a murder trial is opposed to the death penalty, he will use his discretion and our convictions will be superseded.

It reminds me of the case of the only American soldier who was executed for desertion in the last war. After he was found guilty of desertion by a military tribunal the death penalty was passed, on the understanding that when his case was reviewed by a higher court the sentence would be commuted. When the case went to a higher court, the original verdict was confirmed, on the understanding that when the case went to a yet higher court the sentence would be commuted. Eventually, the case went to the President of the United States who found that he could not commute his sentence. The man was therefore shot. Everybody who was involved in that case said that they thought that the sentence would eventually be commuted and that if they had known that it would not be commuted the death sentence would never have been passed.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has said to us, as Members of Parliament, that how we look at this question does not matter because ultimately the jury will decide and that if one or two members of the jury abstain

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

or do not return an absolute majority verdict the ultimate sanction, the death penalty, will not be available to the judge.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Gentleman used the phrase "cop-out". It is an emotive expression. However he describes it, the fact that 12 people will reach a unanimous decision is a most important safeguard. With the utmost respect to the hon. Gentleman, he is dismissing it in a casual, if not a cavalier, way.

Mr. Bell: I hope that I am not dismissing it in a cavalier way. The point was also made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, who referred to a Moslem who might be opposed to the death penalty. I shall turn to the subject of emotive language later.

According to the new clause, a single juror who is not convinced about the need for the death penalty will ensure that a majority verdict cannot be returned. But that would create legal apartheid for the crime of murder. We would introduce two ways of dealing with the same crime.

A jury would have imposed upon them as an additional responsibility the new concept of evil. At the moment they are arbiters of fact. They would also have to ascertain whether the killing was premeditated and whether it was evil. This morning on radio and again in the House tonight, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has sought to show that all these factors are cumulative: that there would have to be premeditation, prior knowledge and evil.

There are possibly three, not two, concepts of murder in the new clause. First, there would have to be premeditation. That in itself could put a rope around the neck of the accused, if he was found guilty. Secondly, there has to be the concept of evil. That is a different concept but it has the same consequence. It would lead to death by hanging, if hanging were to be the lawful method of execution.

Thirdly, what would be the penalty for manslaughter? Manslaughter may be evil but it may not be premeditated. Nevertheless, a jury may have to find, in accordance with the new clause, that the killing was evil and that therefore the death penalty is merited. The test of evil becomes subjective, objective and possibly both at the same time. Is the evil to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has referred evil in intent or evil in the circumstances?

If a man killed his wife with a carving knife in a fit of temper and without a cooling-off period, that would be manslaughter under the law as it now stands; but according to the new clause the manslaughter could be said to be evil because brutality was involved in the death of the man's wife. Therefore, manslaughter could be converted into murder and the death penalty could be imposed.

There are those who argue that there is no such thing as ordinary murder—that all murders are evil and that in this context "evil" is an unnecessary adjective. A famous judge said that there is no such thing as gross negligence; there is only negligence with the epithet added to it. The new clause leads to an assault not only on the Criminal Justice Bill but also on the English language. An attempt is being made to convert the word "evil" from an adjective into a noun and to write it, as such, into our statute law.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Is it not a fact that there are certain people who have been convicted of murder and who are now serving a life sentence who might have gone completely free if the jury had known that the death sentence could be passed upon them?

Mr. Bell: That is one of the dilemmas that the new clause would introduce into our legal system, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing it out to me. I shall deal later with that subject.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) referred to my phrase "cop-out" and said that it was emotive. However, is not the term "evil" likely to inflame prejudice and to force members of a jury to look not at the evidence, circumstantial or otherwise, but at the actual killing? In the example that I gave, the fact that the wife had been brutally killed was not before the court of law. The case, simply, was that she had been killed. However, under the new clause the manner of death would be uppermost in the minds of the members of the jury; they would have to consider not simply that she had been killed but how she had been killed. They would therefore consider the nature of her death. How is a reasonable member of the jury to define evil? How would the man on the Clapham omnibus, referred to by judges of past decades, or the man on the Victoria underground between Pimlico and Green Park, define evil?

The right hon. and learned Member for Southport says that a reasonable man would have no difficulty in satisfying himself that all the necessary ingredients of evil had been established. But the right hon. and learned Gentleman has confused what a learned judge might say after a verdict in a case such as that to which he referred, the Broadwater Farm affair, in describing a man found guilty of murder as "evil". That statement was made after the man had been found guilty of murder and after the evidence had been given. If a direction is to be given by the judge to the jury before the trial, that the crime that they are about to hear and to try is "evil", what happens to the principle of a fair trial and to that equally great British principle that a man is innocent until proven guilty?

8.30 pm

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has not told the House that by adding the emotive word "evil" he has made the verdict in a case of murder not the rational decision of a court but an emotive one. In the 1930s, a little emotion was sometimes conveyed to the jury by leading counsel for the prosecution. In a case of stabbing, the counsel for the prosecution said that the murdered man was plunged into eternity without warning and in the twinkling of an eye.

If it is for the judge to direct the jury that one crime is, or may be, construed as evil, and that another is not, what will the reaction of the jury be? Will not they think, "We do not have to worry too much because the death sentence is not necessarily the only sentence. The man may not be hanged but given only life imprisonment." How will that affect or influence the jury?

Having decided—as I understand the briefing notes that were kindly issued by the right hon. and learned Gentleman — that a man or woman is charged with murder of an evil nature, that is to say where the judge has not ruled that it is not of a non-evil nature—even I hate double negatives, and I wonder what the jury will make of them or of such a direction — the judge cannot afterwards give instructions as to what constitutes evil. It is as if the judge, rather than the jury, had first climbed on

to the Clapham omnibus, converted himself into a reasonable man, then alighted and left the rest of the journey to the jury.

Having decided that murder was committed, and that it is of an evil nature, why should the members of the jury have to choose the only sentence that would mandatorily be available—the death penalty? My right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton and the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup have stated that a morality would enter into the jury's deliberations, and that the court would become not only a court of law, but a court of morals.

On the radio this morning, the right hon. and learned Member for Southport stated that the construction of his new clause depended on the placement of commas, or some such phrase. I submit that that is hardly a satisfactory way for a judge to sum up what the new clause means, and I wonder what the jury would make of it. The draftsmen of the clause and the supplementary notes should have taken a leaf out of French law books because in that country juries are empowered not only to return verdicts of guilty or otherwise, but to state whether there have been extenuating circumstances. That would be a more honest approach to the issue that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has put before the House and to his new clause.

At least, had there been any logic to the new clause, the foreman of the jury would have to declare or return in the first instance a guilty verdict and, in the second, state whether the facts of the case as presented and of which the jury is certain beyond reasonable doubt constitute evil. The jurors would be not only the arbiters of the facts but the keepers of the conscience, responding to the outrage of public opinion and, by their verdict, condemning a prisoner to death. Why should members of the jury be placed in that sordid position?

Therefore, it would not be a case of the prisoner delivering himself into the hands of a jury in a murder case. He would be delivered up to the worst elements of the popular press. So-called public opinion would not be able to gauge or distinguish between the murder itself and its horrific detail, and the prisoner to be tried. Incidentally, the prisoner would remain innocent until proven guilty.

Out of deference to the House—if the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) wishes to intervene, he may do so and I shall give way—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dickens: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Gentleman has invited me to intervene.

Mr. Bell: That is because I believe that an intervention from a standing position is better than one from a sitting position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Hon. Members are still waiting to take part in the debate, and it would be welcome to have no interventions.

Mr. Bell: Out of deference to my parliamentary colleagues who wish to take part in this important debate and who are giving me encouraging nods, I shall finish, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a quotation from Lord Justice Birkett, who stated:

"people are not tried by newspaper, not tried by rumour, but tried by juries called to do justice".

In the twilight of his life, Lord Justice Birkett also declared

"We can never prevent crime or repress crime by severity alone. The eighteenth century demonstrated that. The death penalty was as common then as a magistrate imposing a fine of 40 shillings today. However, people cried out for more severe punishments. Women were burnt alive at the stake and people still cried out for severe punishment. However, crime still persisted."

The entire history of our country shows that the death penalty has no place in our society and that it is not a deterrent. The House should state tonight that the case is not proven for the right hon. and learned Member for Southport. In fact, the case is proven for the defence and for those who do not wish to see the death penalty restored in our country.

Mr. Lawrence: I have no doubt whatever that innocent lives would be saved if capital punishment were restored. I have no doubt that it is a deterrent to some who kill and maim in the course of their criminal enterprises. If would-be murderers are stopped, the innocent people whom they would have killed will live. We should be most concerned to save the potential victim because, in most cases, the potential victim is an innocent person.

I believe that capital punishment would be a deterrent for several reasons, but I shall give only two of those reasons to the House. When I introduced a motion in the House in 1985 to restore capital punishment for terrorist offences, the IRA, which uses capital punishment as a deterrent for its own kind, threatened retaliation if we passed the motion. That clearly suggested that those in the IRA intending to kill feared the death penalty.

When I asked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to explain why that happened, he did not do so, because he did not have an answer. When I asked the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) to do so, he could not either, because he had no answer. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) tried to answer that question and spoke about a psychosis of death. He continued by asking what would be the point of the IRA trying to change our minds by making that threat. But as I recall, that is precisely what happened. Hon. Members told me that they were in favour of capital punishment but that they did not want to be held responsible for the lives of innocent soldiers in Northern Ireland if we passed that motion. Therefore, the threat did work.

The second reason that I believe that capital punishment is a deterrent is that in the course of my career as a barrister I have been told many times by men of violence that they feared the rope and that they would neither take lethal weapons for burglary or robbery, nor enlist the help of young tearaways who might go crazy and kill someone. When people write to me to say that capital punishment has never acted as a deterrent, I am afraid that I prefer the evidence of experts to the guesses of the kind-hearted.

Of course I appreciate that not every one would be deterred. However, if some would be deterred and if some innocent lives would be saved, is that not well worth having? I go further and join my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock) in believing not only that innocent lives would be saved but that there would be less violent crime generally in our society—fewer brutal beatings, muggings and woundings—if capital punishment were restored. If everyone was aware that there was a line beyond which no one could pass without suffering the ultimate deterrent, there would

[Mr. Lawrence]

be more respect for other people and their possessions, and the general atmosphere of moral disintegration in society would be arrested.

I remind the House what has happened since the contrary view, that capital punishment is wrong, was adopted by the House. We suffer a much more violent, vicious society, the numbers of murders has risen, violent men are no longer afraid of carrying firearms and the number of firearm offences has shot through the roof. Can anyone seriously believe that that would still have happened if we had retained capital punishment? The elderly are terrified to leave their homes, women are frightened to walk alone in the streets, our football stadiums are half empty and 33 convicted murderers have been released to kill again in the past 20 years. That is what the gentler, kinder, more considerate approach has achieved. It has utterly failed.

Naturally, I am aware that the arguments against capital punishment, most of which we have heard this afternoon, have some substance, but on balance they are less than convincing. We are told that capital punishment is against God's law. If that is so, it took the churches hundreds of years to discover the fact, and since the Almighty has not seen fit to stop some of the carnage and killing, he must be leaving that to us, as a significant number of clerics have affirmed in a letter sent to hon. Members today.

We are told that capital punishment is uncivilised, and I agree; but we are living in an uncivilised society in which civilised remedies have failed. We are told that capital punishment would create martyrs and lead to the taking of hostages. But it is not only death that creates martyrs; life imprisonment does exactly the same, with the added feature that martyrdom of the dead is largely anniversarial, while martyrdom of a prisoner is continuous. Nor is it only the threat of death that causes the taking of hostages. Hostages are taken in the Lebanon to induce the release of people from prison. Capital punishment differs in that there is no point in taking a hostage after the murderer is dead.

We are told that the death penalty is no more than vengeance; but it is better for the state to exercise vengeance according to just rules of law than that vengeance should be wrought without fair trial by frustrated people down dark alleyways, as happens in Northern Ireland. We are told that juries would acquit more often. Perhaps they would, but an acquittal for capital murder need not be an acquittal for non-capital murder or manslaughter. The point is that the would-be killer could never be sure in advance that he would not suffer the death penalty, so he may well be deterred. Deterrence is the point.

We are told that juries must not make moral judgments, but that is precisely what they do, day in and day out, in every criminal trial. They must make moral decisions whether a man is guilty or not; whether his actions are honest or dishonest; whether his actions are decent or indecent; and even whether he shall be imprisoned for life in murder cases.

The right hon. Member for Gorton listed those who might have been hanged if the death penalty had been retained, but that is not good enough. If there had been capital punishment, they might not have been convicted of capital murder, and, if convicted, they might have been acquitted on appeal. One cannot rely on a purely hypothetical argument for not doing what is right.

I understand why many people cannot bring themselves to sanction the taking of life, and I have sympathy with their view. It is a difficult, nasty step for anybody to have to take. However, they might think differently if an innocent loved one were murdered and might have stayed alive if the state had not been so weak in its approach to the most evil of criminals. It is time this House brought back some security and safety for law-abiding citizens.

It does not matter whether the new clause is well drafted or wrongly drafted or whether it applies to Northern Ireland. The public expect us to make a decision on principle. No one can really suppose for a moment that if we approved the new clause today capital punishment would be introduced as an adjunct to this criminal justice measure and just tacked on during the Bill's passage. The capital punishment offence would be so important that the Government would have to say, "We shall not attach this to the Criminal Justice Bill. We shall have to have a separate Bill, having considered all the ways in which capital punishment can be properly introduced and reflecting the wish of the House."

8.45 pm

The exact method of introducing capital punishment does not matter tonight. If legislation were introduced, we could undoubtedly ensure that a tribunal would make absolutely certain that people about whom there was the slightest doubt or for whom anything could be said after the trial should not hang. Many of those who are worried about mistaken verdicts would be reassured if such a tribunal were introduced. Indeed, in the past the Lord Chancellor has suggested just such a measure.

What matters is whether the House will now face up to its responsibility and reflect the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people we represent. The new clause reflects those wishes and it is our duty to support it and the wishes of the people. Therefore, I support the new clause.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I make yet a further appeal for brevity? It would be helpful if speeches could be under 10 minutes.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) spoke with his usual passionate eloquence which we respect and enjoy, but he fell into the error of misrepresentation when he dealt with terrorists. He suggested that my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) had spoken about the psychosis of death. He did not; he talked about the psychosis of terrorism and answered the point that the hon. and learned Gentleman kept repeating in interventions. Terrorists are psychotic, which means that some do not care whether or not they face death and, possibly even worse, others want to face death and welcome the martyrdom of it.

Tonight we are debating how best to protect the public from murder, but it is a much more complex question than that. We are debating how best to protect the public from murder while maintaining a fair system of trial, sentencing and review by appeal. Let us not forget that since the

abolition of capital punishment our system of appeal has developed by the introduction of the Home Secretary reference.

It would be a sick mockery if mistakes such as those which were listed by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) could be corrected only posthumously. It would not help the victim or his surviving family. The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the case of Geoffrey Mycock who was convicted in 1969 and released in 1984. I met him on two occasions before his case was reviewed by the Court of Appeal and on the day on which his appeal was allowed in the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Mycock had been convicted almost entirely on the basis of forensic evidence, consisting of the identification of fibres. After many years, it became clear that the forensic scientist who had given that evidence had been an unreliable witness on many occasions, particularly at that trial. There was a long campaign, which included work by Members of Parliament, to have that case and others reviewed.

When I visited Mr. Mycock for the first time, he was in Nottingham prison and had been in gaol for 15½ years, but he was very much alive. Indeed, he was alive with a lively determination which I judged could have been based only on the truth. When he reached the Court of Appeal on review after reference by the Home Secretary, the Crown did not even seek to argue that his conviction had been correct. As a result, he was released. He had lost 16 years of his life but he did not lose his life itself.

After a difficult period of adjustment, Mr. Mycock is leading a normal, private life in society. That error has been corrected in the way in which it should have been —by releasing him to make the best of what is left of his life. I feel a revulsion that the state should even countenance that he could have been killed and not have the opportunity to live the rest of his life at peace. His example is only one of many similar cases.

Those who support the new clause accept that they are prepared to face, on behalf of the state, the fact that such terrible mistakes could be committed. I am not, and that is one of the main reasons why I shall be voting against the new clause.

Secondly, I should like to turn to some of the practical difficulties which would arise if the new clause were passed. If a person kills and at the time of so doing intends to kill or cause serious injury, he is guilty of murder. That is the test of murder which is applied in our courts. It is surely in the public interest that all those who commit murder should be convicted of it. Once they have been convicted of murder, the public can be protected by a proper criminal justice policy and by proper examination of the murderers and their cases while they are in prison. The test of murder should be applied consistently; it is fairly simple; it can be and is applied consistently. What is murder in Newcastle is murder in Bodmin and anywhere else that one may care to mention in the country under the present rules.

Those who practised the law during the era of capital murder, although it could be defined quite easily and clearly, tell me that it was extremely difficult to obtain a verdict of guilty. It happened only in the plainest of cases, yet even then we know from the catalogue given by the right hon. Member for Gorton that mistakes were made, even in what were thought to be the plainest of cases.

The new clause would lead to wrongful acquittals of murder, perverse acquittals of murder and acquittals of murder which would be the result of the lottery of the random selection of a jury.

The new clause is defective not only because of what it would cause but because of its drafting. Let us look at some of the words in the new clause:

"in circumstances which a reasonable person would consider to be evil".

Does that include what happens before the killing, at the time of the killing or after the killing? Supposing a crime of passion is committed and in blind panic, as has happened, the murderer cuts up the body and does vile and ghastly things with it. As the clause is drafted, that person will be liable to execution for murder as a result of the things that he did after a dead body lay before him.

Mr. Dickens: Quite right too.

Mr. Carlile: That seems to be quite wrong.

What is suggested in the new clause is that premeditated killings should be capital offences. It is all very well for the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) to say that it can be changed later. That shows the danger of presenting a clause such as this on Report. If we are to introduce capital punishment, it should be introduced only after proper consideration of a proper Bill which goes through the proper stages—although I hope that we shall never have to face up to that.

Under the clause, any premediated killing would be capital—a killing by euthanasia; a killing by a wife who, under intolerable strain, picks up the carving knife and waits for her drunken and violent husband and stabs him. Indeed, one of the matters that the right hon. and learned Member for Southport has not faced up to is that his new clause even deprives accused people of the defence of diminished responsibility which is currently available to them. That defence results from a temporary loss of sanity, which all reasonable members of the public and which certainly juries regard as giving a proper defence to a charge of murder.

I should like to talk briefly about some misconceptions that we have heard about deterrence. We heard an extremely eloquent speech on deterrence from the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who has had to face day by day for about the last 20 years the risk that he might be murdered; who has had his friends around him murdered; and who knew many constituents who have been murdered. We should value his judgment that capital punishment would not be a deterrent in Northern Ireland.

I would say to the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), if she were here, that, although she complained that the lack of capital punishment has led to the increasing use of guns in crime, she was ignoring the evidence of states in the United States of America which have capital punishment. It is quite plain, if we examine what has been happening in those states, that, despite the existence and use of capital punishment, the use of guns in the course of crime has increased. Indeed, as another hon. Member said, there is no evidence that there is more homicide in countries where there is no capital punishment than in countries where there is.

This new clause serves to create confusion. It certainly does nothing to deal with the general problem of burgeoning crime that we face today.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I must say that I do not care for new clause 1. Murder is, by definition, evil and, although circumstances may have some effect on the degree of that evil, the evil remains.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for selecting my amendment. For some time I have believed that the House should not take upon itself to have debates on whether the death penalty should be restored until we know what public opinion wants. Many hon. Members who have spoken have called public opinion in aid of their point of view, but over the past 18 years—during which time the House has had no fewer than eight separate debates on the subject—none of us have troubled to discover what the nation feels about the abolition of the death penalty and whether it would feel safer if the death penalty existed. I have put down my amendment because I believe that we must discover that simple fact and I should like to elaborate a little on my reasons for it.

It may be that the decision that was initially taken in 1969 to abolish capital punishment was fatally flawed because, unlike the promises made with the Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965, the House did not have five years of crime statistics on which to make its judgment. I suspect that it made a judgment that was based more on emotion than on statistics or reason. I believe that we made the decision without an adequate basis of fact, and that has plagued the subject ever since.

In tonight's debate we can argue that we are talking merely about a new clause or that we are talking once again about whether we should have capital punishment as the ultimate deterrent in our system of sentencing. Who of us would dare hazard that this is the last debate that we shall have on this subject? Should we not ask ourselves why this subject keeps returning to the Floor of the House roughly every two years? I suggest that it does so because we do not know the will of the people and because we seem not be sensitive to whatever that will may be.

In 1969, I was one of those who voted for abolition. I did so then — I have done so on a number of other occasions — because I believed that the abolition of hanging would not have much effect on the incidence of murder. Recently I have imposed a self-denying ordinance on my ability to vote because of my belief in the value of a referendum and because I want to know what the people think.

9 pm

I cannot deny that there has been an increase in the number of murders, an increase that is to be seen in any statistics that any one of us cares to consider. I cannot deny that an increasing number of weapons are being carried in pursuit of crime, or that the police are being forced more and more to carry weapons themselves. I am aware that when weapons are carried by criminals there is an intent to use them and to kill with them. The carrying of a weapon is a rational, calculated act and not one of emotion. I am aware also that before the law was changed such a situation did not exist.

If we had replaced capital punishment with life sentences that were life sentences, rather than the 10 years which on average is a life sentence now, they might have had an effect. By that means we might have persuaded the people that they are as safe without capital punishment as they are with it. As so-called life sentences seem not to deter, it seems that we have a duty to ask the people whether they are satisfied with the present situation. Do they accept that abolition, with its belief in redemption of even the most evil people, is the better course, even if we have to accept higher rates of murder as a result, or that the brutality and irredeemable nature of capital punishment should be restored, albeit for a trial period?

As I have said, we have the duty to ask the people through a consultative referendum. I say that because no one in the Chamber can say that he or she knows with any certainty whether society is more or less safe without capital punishment than it would be if it existed. It is a personal judgment that is coloured by individual concepts of morality.

I know that on hearing "referendum" some of my hon. Friends will mutter about ours being a representative democracy and remind me of the Edmund Burke dictum that we individually should form our own judgment. I suggest that the comments of an 18th century politician are not really relevant at the end of the 20th century. He spoke when Parliament was of a different stamp, when the populace was largely illiterate and uneducated and did not possess television, radio or mass-circulation newspapers. It could scarcely claim to be informed. That society cannot be compared with our own. We have now a highly educated populace that is well informed and articulate. In these times those outside the Chamber are as well equipped as we are to make a decision on their individual safety and the safety of their community.

In 18 years we have never sought to ascertain the strength of public opinion. Why? Have we failed to do so because the feelings of the people might contradict the decisions that we have made on the Floor of the House, or because we think that if we have one referendum we might move on to having others, which will cause us to feel that we are losing control of our nation's affairs? I do not think so.

A referendum of the sort that I am talking about would be based on moral issues. I am not advocating referendums on all the great issues of our time, but I do not believe that the House can arrogate to itself a greater wisdom that it clearly does not possess. In simple numbers, membership of this place does not amount to the average size of the polling samples that constitute opinion polls. Our votes are even less representative on moral issues than we care to admit.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Sir Winston Churchill said many years ago, "Trust the people", and I echo his words. A three-week campaign followed by a consultative referendum would give us the information without which this debate is empty.

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: We would then know the will of the people and we could act accordingly if we were so minded.

Mr. Gale: We are debating a new clause to the Criminal Justice Bill. In the past three months those of us who served on the Committee considering that Bill have watched and listened as Labour and alliance spokesmen have shed crocodile tears over law and order. We witnessed the Opposition vote against the abolition of the defence's right to challenge jurors without cause. We witnessed the Opposition vote against modest Government measures to guard against lenient sentencing

policy. We shall be interested to see the results of tonight's vote and whether the Opposition will represent a cross section of views as we shall on the Conservative Benches or whether they will, as they did in 1983, toe a party line. [HON. MEMBERS: "This is a free vote."] The condemned men have had a hearty dinner.

The opposition to this clause faces a dilemma. Two weeks ago a married man with two children was hacked to death in a south London car park. His body was left lying beside a car and the axe with which he had been murdered was left beside him. Yesterday, I spoke to that man's mother. I did so at the request of an alliance Member of this House who felt unable to answer that lady's questions.

That lady wanted to know what this House was going to do to deter similar murders. She wanted to know why her husband and herself, as taxpayers, would have to support that murderer in prison for the rest of his life. Not surprisingly, her Member of Parliament, who is an abolitionist, was unable to satisfy her requests. I had to say that, in all honesty, I did not believe that tonight this House would be likely to satisfy her request. However, I understood her point of view.

This new clause has been subjected to misinformation and disinformation. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)—I am sorry that he is no longer in his place—said on the BBC lunchtime news, and again in his speech, that the murderer of a drunken, brutal husband would be liable to the death penalty under this clause. The hon. and learned Gentleman well knows that that is wholly incorrect, but he is in good company. The hon. and learned Gentleman is joined by the gentlemen of the press in their misinformation and disinformation about this clause.

Yesterday *The London Evening Standard* stated:

"Tomorrow the House of Commons will once again vote on hanging for murderers."

At least, we have established tonight that this is not a hanging debate, but a debate on capital punishment. That newspaper went on to say:

"There are certain crimes so hideous — the Moors murders, for example—that if a law could be fashioned to hang those guilty of them, it would pass through Parliament by acclamation."

I would suggest that that is exactly what my right hon. and learned Friend's clause seeks to do. The aim of the new clause is to deter.

We have heard a great deal this evening about the definition of evil. I believe that 12 men and women on a jury are capable of determining whether someone is evil. We have had the judgment on the Broadwater Farm case. Indeed, the judge said to the man in the dock, "You are an evil man". One cannot define what the judge said, but everyone in this country knows what he meant. I suggest that most people agree with him.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that to make a decision on the death penalty would place an intolerable burden on the jury. However, I believe that that type of burdensome decision is required from juries in this country on all sorts of matters every day of the year. I believe that the men and women serving on juries do not shirk their duty and are capable of making responsible decisions.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller) who spoke so eloquently earlier in the debate. I am not seeking revenge, but I am seeking a deterrent. It has been said that there is no evidence to suggest that capital punishment deters crime. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that a policeman walking down the street deters burglaries. However, burglaries that are not committed are not reported, in the same way as deterred murders would not be reported.

It has been said that there has been an increase in the availability of weapons in recent years and that that is why there has been an increase in the incidence of armed crime.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gale: I have very little time.

The increase in armed crime has taken place since the abolition of capital punishment. I suggest that if there has been an increase in the availability of weapons, it is because there has been a demand for weapons following abolition.

It has been said that we risk executing an innocent man. We have always faced that possibility as we face the possibility of gaoling innocent men or women for life when they have been wrongfully convicted. What we do know is that there are 33 innocent victims who, since abolition, have been murdered by murderers who have been released from prison. Those people might not be dead if we had had capital punishment on the statute book.

What we are seeking to do tonight is not a light decision, but I passionately believe that if, by taking this decision, we can deter the murder of one innocent person, that will be worthwhile. I believe that capital punishment will be that deterrent, and I am not ashamed to say that in their hearts I know that many hon. Members feel that way too. I hope that those beliefs will be represented in the lobbies tonight and I urge my hon. Friends—I use the word Friends advisedly—on both sides of the House to represent those views.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: I have listened to this debate since it started, as I have listened to most such debates in the past quarter of a century. It is quite clear in the Chamber and outside that there are understandably strong feelings about the decline in law and order. It is a subject that we cannot ignore. The situation gets worse. There is fear on the streets. I do not think that there is fear on the streets of Morley or the streets of Batley.

Mrs. Peacock: There is.

Mr. Rees: In that case, people need to look at the situation in some of the inner city areas where there is a real problem.

There is fear on the streets in some housing estates. They seem to have been designed to facilitate crime. The wife of a recent Prime Minister was mugged not a mile from this place a fortnight ago. Nobody on either side of the House can be happy at the situation. However, this is not the time to relate the over-facile promises made in 1979. The situation gets worse all the time. In my view, the debate about the return of capital punishment is a reflection of the concern for law and order generally.

I sat in hospital towards the end of last year with some ex-service men. A sergeant who had flown Wellingtons said that one night his crew was going off and that he was pulled out because he had sinus trouble. That is not easy if one is a crew member. His crew was killed and he said to me, "I wish that I had been killed. Living in this country now with the problems of law and order is not what I fought for." The feeling lies deep. It lies deeply outside the House. It is a feeling that could be played with very easily.

[Mr. Rees]

We would do better if we concentrated on the problem of law and order, on the problem of what to do with lifers and the problem of the role of the police, rather than pretend that there is yet another easy solution.

At the turn of the century when the crime rate was high — it went down in the 1920s and 1930s — they had hanging. They hanged people at a high rate of knots, but murders still took place. To pretend that there is a simple solution—I suppose we shall all hear that in the general election this year—is not to the credit of any political party because there is a growing feeling that none of the political parties is talking sense. I do not believe that one can stand up and say, "Return capital punishment and all will be solved." The electorate will see through that.

The new clause speaks of a unanimous verdict. Given what has emerged since, I am not convinced that the juries in some of the nasty murder trials of recent weeks would have reached a unanimous verdict. Will it be easy to determine whether a murder was premeditated? The new clause speaks of "a reasonable person"—there are not all that many reasonable people in this House, let alone outside it. The new clause continues:

"in a manner, or for a reason, or in circumstances".

Ignoring for a moment the general problem of hanging, I do not believe that the new clause is drawn in a way that would aid judicial decision-making. It is misconceived and bad.

9.15 pm

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): Can the right hon. Gentleman solve a problem that exercises the minds of many? As a nation, for many years we have not been able to resolve the problem of obscenity. How, then, shall we resolve the problem of evil?

Mr. Rees: The hon. Gentleman is experienced in prison reform and, as Home Secretary and since, I learnt the value of the extra-parliamentary work that he does. He has raised an interesting point. We have not been debating obscenity, but the words that a jury must interpret. That puts the jury in a different position.

The new clause is not only badly drafted; it does not achieve its aim. It is based on a complete misunderstanding of the Irish situation. I must tell the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) that for nearly 20 years, first through Gardiner and later through Diplock, we worked in Northern Ireland in circumstances in which we could not have juries—Gardiner agreed with that—not only because a jury would be divided but because jurors on a terrorist case would not be able to go home at night. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said tonight that that did not worry him. It worries me, and it worries me that we put the lives of soldiers at risk.

The right hon. and learned Member for Southport did not examine the question of Northern Ireland, where 2,500 people are dead. He is shaking his head, but there can be no juries in Northern Ireland. I would not be a juror in Northern Ireland, and I would not ask my wife to be one. My life would be at risk in a murder trial.

It is no good Englishmen—for this purpose I count myself as one—saying that Northern Ireland and the RUC do not matter: we over here have decided that they can have juries. They cannot have juries in Northern Ireland. It is wrong for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to cobble together the new clause, sit back and say, "Leave it to Northern Ireland to find something." Jury service puts people's lives at risk, and no politician has the right to do that, in whatever cause.

Sir Ian Percival: The right hon. Gentleman will I am sure acknowledge that I faced that matter head on and said that I could not agree to an inconsistent clause. It has to apply throughout the United Kingdom.

Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that, for fear of the consequences, we must not have juries? He has overlooked the fact that even if that were true—I do not accept that it is—other suggestions have been advanced, such as the unanimous verdict of three judges.

Mr. Rees: It is no use coming to the House on a matter of principle with a new clause that talks of 12 good men —or women—and true, of unanimous verdicts and so on. What will the right hon. and learned Gentleman say to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), whose constituency is in an area in which members of the RUC, soldiers and civilians are dying every week, and have died in the past? It is no good saying to him, "Incidentally, we have juries here, but you lot over there —you colonial chaps—can have a judge assisted by two assessors." Either there is a case for juries, or there is not. The right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot have it both ways. The new clause is a poor amendment.

Let me explain. In 1973, the Leader of the House of Lords was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He believed in the death penalty, and he kept the death penalty in Northern Ireland. The figures were given at the time. I have them here, but I do not have time to give them. A large number of people had been killed that year and the year before. But the Unionist Government in Northern Ireland had not used the death penalty because they could not use it—not because they were cowards. Loyalists are not cowards. Republicans are not cowards. The people of Northern Ireland are far less cowardly than most of us over here.

A Protestant from the Shankill was found guilty of murder. Having just put legislation through the House, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland used the royal prerogative and the man did not hang, because the right hon. Gentleman could not do it. It was not because he was a coward, not the Leader of the House of Lords. He has seen more military action than most of us have had hot dinners. Later in the year it was a Catholic who was found guilty. The right hon. Gentleman said, "I cannot go on in that way." The death penalty was removed in Northern Ireland because of the reality of the situation — not because of an emotional spasm about being in favour of or against the death penalty.

My neighbour, the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), says that the new clause is a giant step forward. It is not. It is defective and it does not understand Northern Ireland. Any lawyer who votes for it can be doing that—I respect his views—only because he wants something to be done. It cannot be because he believes that the new clause will work. It is not a major step forward.

There is a problem of law and order. My constituents face it, in an inner city. We do precious little about it, but at the time of a general election we pretend that we will do something about it. No doubt tomorrow people will say, "It's a pity. We could have had the death penalty and in

a week the whole thing would have been solved." That is not so. This defective new clause ignores Northern Ireland. English politicians, of whom I am one, should see that it is defective, not just on juries, but in other ways.

I feel strongly about this matter. I have friends on both sides of the divide in Northern Ireland—nationalists and loyalists—whose friends have been killed and murdered. I have impolite words to describe the paramilitary forces in Northern Ireland. They will not be deterred by the death penalty. This morning I took the opportunity to go into the Library and look at the story of the 1916 rising. I am interested in it. My father died as a result of the first world war. He was brought back from France to be at the Easter rising. He never thought that many years later his son would be Secretary of State for a divided country. Redmond spoke in the House about the nationalist party. Because of the war and our feelings about it we shot—was it six? [AN HON. MEMBER: "No, 16."] We shot 16 Irishmen, including Connolly, the great Socialist. They sat him in the chair and shot him. From that moment onwards, Left, Right and Centre in the south of Ireland said, "The English are finished." Pearce said, "The fools, the fools," about the death of a friend of his, "They have left us the Fenian dead". From then on, forget governing Ireland. Forget home rule. Forget Gladstone. Forget Healy.

The new clause's greatest weakness is this. It is an Englishman's clause. They do not understand Ireland and never have. We have a duty there, but it is to try to understand. We should not fiddle about with the new clause, which does not deserve to see the light of day. Of course, there is a law and order problem. I say to the House: deal with it. My constituents want it to be dealt with. They do not want to be fooled. The new clause claims that by bringing back capital punishment problems will be solved and there will be a deterrent. The problems in our society run deeper than that. There are guns, and people on the fiddle in the cities. There is something wrong with society. If capital punishment is returned in this daft way it will not deter that. If I am understandably angry it is because I feel for Ireland. The English have done it again. By doing this, they think that there is an advantage on this side of the water. It does not exist.

I shall vote against this new clause tonight because it deserves to be voted against irrespective of my general view. What a piddling little new clause to bring forward to the House. This new clause is not worth anything. I hope that it will be withdrawn. Let us have a proper debate about law and order.

Mr. Mark Carlisle (Warrington, South): Like the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), I have sat through the whole of this debate. I made my maiden speech in this House on 21 December 1964 in favour of the Bill then presented by the late Mr. Sydney Silverman in favour of the abolition of capital punishment. I have sat through many other debates since then and I suspect that this is the last time that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) and I will sit through such a debate in the House.

On every occasion this issue has been debated seriously. The debate has justified the seriousness of the issue. That has happened again tonight. I was slightly sorry that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), whom I expect to join in the Lobby tonight, tried to imply a criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) because she happens to take a different view from him and from me.

I believe that all hon. Members have a duty to vote according to what we believe to be right, taking into account the views of those whom we represent. However, in the end, we have the responsibility to make up our own minds. I shall oppose the new clause because I am opposed to the return of capital punishment.

There are strong moral objections to the death penalty and to the state taking life. I do not suggest that those objections are by any means absolute. I accept and realise that the state has a responsibility to secure the safety of society. However, I believe that the moral objections to the state taking life mean that the burden of proof for the restoration of capital punishment must rest on those who claim that it is right and necessary to take life. I believe that they can do that only if they can show that the death penalty is a unique deterrent.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) spoke with great certainty and passion about the deterrent effect of the death penalty. I would have thought that no one would suggest that any form of penalty is not always some form of deterrent. However, is the death penalty a unique deterrent which we must bring back now? As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) said, the evidence is totally and wholly inconclusive. There is no significant difference in the rate of homicide in those countries with capital punishment and those without. The case for the return of capital punishment has not been made this evening.

I was rather surprised at the cavalier attitude adopted by those who support the new clause to the question of possible mistakes in verdicts. The very finality of the punishment is a matter of importance. Surely there is a great difference between making a mistake which results in a person being hanged or suffering death as a result of the verdict and a mistake in which someone is sentenced to life imprisonment. In the latter case, the mistake may be rectified.

Having made my own position clear, I should say in all sincerity that even if I supported a return to capital punishment I could not possibly vote for the concept contained in the new clause because I believe that it is unworkable. The intentions are clearly good, but I believe that the proposition is impracticable. The new clause deals with premeditated and planned killing. I accept that drafting errors could be put right in another place, but the new clause would require that if the jurors found that a person had knowingly or intentionally killed another person they would then have to ask themselves whether that killing had been carried out in a manner, for a reason or in circumstances which a reasonable person would consider to be evil.

9.30 pm

Like my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks, I find it difficult to conceive of circumstances in which the intentional killing of one person by another could be for a reason or in a manner which a reasonable person would not consider to be evil. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks said, murder is, of its nature, an evil act. The inference to be drawn from the new clause that there may be cases of intentional killing which in their manner

[Mr. Mark Carlisle]

or circumstances are somehow not to be considered evil is a concept that the House should neither recognise nor endorse.

Even if one accepts that that is not the intention and that the new clause is an attempt, albeit unsuccessful, to identify a particular type of murder by its degree of heinousness, juries will be asked to identify those most serious types of murder which in their eyes merit the death sentence. The jury is being asked, in effect, to decide the degree of moral turpitude involved in a particular killing. That is a wholly new concept and something that no jury has been asked to do before. Deciding whether a person should be subject to the death penalty on the basis of the degree of moral turpitude involved is by its nature a purely subjective decision and bound to lead to great inconsistency in its application. The test is not capable of being applied objectively across a range of cases because it depends upon a moral concept that is not capable of definition but must be decided on the basis of the subjective opinions of the 12 people chosen to form a particular jury.

A clause in that form would inevitably mean that the decision whether a person should suffer death would depend not on the heinousness of the crime but on the subjective views of the jurors and would therefore be totally inconsistent because juries faced with similar facts in similar cases in different parts of the country are bound to reach entirely inconsistent decisions. As has been pointed out several times today, a juror who is a strong believer in the abolition of capital punishment would be likely to influence the outcome by being unable to go along with the concept of the clause requiring the jury to adjudicate on whether the death sentence is justified. The resulting inconsistency would make the clause completely unworkable.

I do not consider it a fair task to ask a jury to undertake. It is not right to ask a jury to adjudicate on a sentence in the way that this clause would require it to do. It is no good my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller) saying that we are voting for the principle tonight. We are voting for a new clause in a piece of legislation that is before the House. That new clause is gravely flawed and, despite my right hon. and learned Friend's efforts, I hope that it will be rejected.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): Like the right hon. and learned Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle), I was here in 1964 when Sydney Silverman's Bill was introduced. I had been consistent in my opposition to hanging before I came to the House, and this will certainly be the last contribution that I shall make in this Chamber on the issue of capital punishment. Not long after I came here, a policeman was murdered and two others injured in a brutal attack in a little station in Cumbria. At the time my postbag was full of letters asking me to support hanging. I stood my ground and said that I would vote against it. I also said that I would be prepared to go back to Carlisle and justify my action. This I did and later many of the people who had written to ask me to oppose capital punishment wrote to congratulate me on being consistent in the stand that I have taken. I have listened to and taken part in almost every debate on this issue since then.

Not long after I came here, like other hon. Members, I applied for a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association trip. I was fortunate in being selected to go to Australia. The leader then was Lord Brooke, known in this House as Mr. Henry Brooke. During the three weeks that I was in Australia I became very friendly with Henry Brooke, so much so that when he died I felt that I had lost a good and loyal friend.

I well remember the Sunday night, after attending a service in the Methodist central hall in Sydney, going back to the hotel and having dinner with Henry Brooke. We spent a long time talking very privately about capital punishment. I will never forget that he told me that, as a Conservative Home Secretary, he had reprieved more murderers than any other Home Secretary. That, I thought, was an admission. He also said that time and time again he had had an awful job trying to make up his mind whether he should reprieve or not. He said, "I don't want to go through that again."

A few years afterwards we had another debate on the same issue. I remember Henry Brooke speaking from the Opposition Back Bench, pleading with the House not to bring back hanging. His plea was successful. I hope that the plea that we are making tonight will be successful too.

On Monday *The Independent* said:

"Above all, the responsibility for deciding whether another human being should live or die is too much for anybody to shoulder—be it a judge, a Home Secretary or a member of a jury. No matter how sanitised, and no matter what the safeguards, capital punishment remains unacceptable in a civilised society."

I stand by that and will vote against this new clause tonight.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I do not know whether capital punishment would deter; I suspect that it would. Many hon. Members think that it would not, but their views are no more confirmed by the evidence than mine are. None of us knows for certain. One thing I know for certain is that, before abolition, the average British police officer acted in the belief that while on duty he was protected by the invisible armour plate of the law of capital punishment. The police were convinced, and acted in the conviction, that any criminal who murdered a police officer would be signing his own death warrant. It makes little difference whether that belief was or was not statistically or morally justified. What matters it that in that belief our unarmed police—for they were unarmed then—regularly performed acts of gallantry in the face of criminal gunmen. They did so as a matter of routine.

Today there is a new position. First, there has been a massive increase in the carrying and the use of firearms by criminals, precisely as the Police Federation predicted to the House. There is nothing accidental about that. The man who cleans, oils and takes out a gun for the commission of a crime does so as a rational act. He does so because he believes that it will be easier to extract from his potential victim the money that he is seeking. He also believes that if challenged he is more likely with that gun so be able to get away with his crime.

The second major change since abolition, which again the Police Federation predicted in a memorandum to the House, is that as a result of the removal of what the police believe was a sure-fire defence against criminal gunmen, policemen would become "much more hesitant"—those were the words used in the memorandum — about risking their lives to arrest armed criminals. So it has come to pass.

The practical point is that in that split second of timing when, as often happens, the policeman has to decide whether or not to tackle an armed criminal, the odds are now stacked against the policeman. If the police officer, while unarmed, decides to tackle the criminal, the policeman risks all he has—his life, his family and his future. But the gunman he confronts no longer risks his life, for the law now protects him from that. So if the gunman shoots the policeman, who may well be the only witness, first, he greatly increases his chance of getting away scot free and, secondly, if he is caught and convicted, the worst that can befall him is a sentence of life imprisonment.

The odds are too one-sided. No hon. Member should therefore be surprised if nowadays more and more police officers hesitate to tackle armed criminals unless they, too, are issued with firearms. That is the third development which, again, the police predicted at the time of abolition; the policeman had to be armed for his own and the public's protection.

I do not say that abolition is the sole or even the principal reason why more and more police posts have had to be issued with firearms, but what I find painful and egregious is that the voices that are loudest in the House in condemnation of the police for carrying guns are the very voices which so scornfully brushed aside the warnings of the police that this would become inevitable if the capital sentence were abolished.

I would not support the death penalty for the vast majority of murders committed in Britain — those committed in family circumstances. Nor do I believe that the capital sentence would deter the fanatical terrorist murderer or those who kill under the influence of drugs. However, some killers of two types could be deterred by the prospect of death after conviction. One of those types is the hired gun, the professional assassin, who makes a contract to commit murder on behalf of some terrorist gang or even as an enforcer working for some criminal agency. Such men exist and there is no doubt that they kill for money. The most essential characteristic of such men is that they want to live to collect and enjoy their blood money.

9.45 pm

It is known to many in the security service that in those nations which have the death penalty the price of hiring such an assassin or enforcer goes up. The cash nexus makes it more difficult to procure such a murderer, and to that extent the capital sentence provides a measure of increased protection for the potential victim. The second type of potential murderers who would be deterred are the members of criminal gangs, notably here in London, who before abolition of the death penalty would regularly frisk younger members of the gang to make sure that they were not carrying guns. They did so because they feared, in the vernacular of the time, that if one of them killed a cop they would all be topped.

It is now the norm and not the exception for such gangs of criminal burglars to go out in London with guns. They feel safer that way because the gun makes it easier and quicker to force their victims to hand over money, and because if they are caught the gun provides them with a better chance to escape. I and the vast majority of police officers dealing with such gangs believe that the restoration of the capital sentence would serve to reduce both the carrying and the use of firearms by such criminals and would therefore save innocent lives.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): On behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), I can tell the House that we have had a most interesting and reflective debate. I say wih some diffidence and humility that the speeches that we have heard on both sides of the argument have, in the main, been excellent contributions. It is with equal diffidence that I shall briefly address one or two of the points made by hon. Members who opposed the new clause and then make a few brief and substantive remarks.

In his thoughtful and interesting speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made much of the difficulties that would apply in Northern Ireland if this clause were to become part of our criminal law. In a most moving speech, the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) told the House of his concern about the difficulties that would apply in the Province if this provision were enacted.

Not long ago in France, the judges in a case involving terrorism, despite the advice that by all accounts they received from the French Government, said quite clearly that once a nation comes to believe that sentences imposed after due process of law in open court have to be tempered by the effect that those sentences may have on terrorists or others, that nation will go down a very dangerous road. Of course this is not an easy matter. A former Prime Minister, a former distinguished Home Secretary and the present Home Secretary have made that clear. However, that surely cannot be the overriding consideration of hon. Members on this issue.

If so much is to be made of the drafting point, why should we not heed the advice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Carlisle)? Although he opposed the clause, he made it clear that if the House were minded to reintroduce the death penalty, it would ensure that the clause could be suitably amended if necessary before it became law.

Many Conservative Members deeply regret that the level of violence, not only in the United Kingdom but in all Western societies, is still so high that it is inevitable that we should debate such a motion either now or at such equally propitious time. Whatever politicians or sociologists may claim to be the reason for it, violent behaviour is unquestionably with us. Although we are dealing with the death penalty for murder, it is wrong to think that the debate is concerned solely with about 600 cases. We are also dealing with the many cases of violent assault that escape being murder cases by a hair's breadth, thanks to the skill of surgeons and the dedication of the police.

I understand the argument about the cathartic effect on society, which from time to time feels the need to ventilate its revulsion and contempt as it witnesses the appalling crimes that are committed. However, that alone would not make me support the clause. I accept that the amendment will not apply in many cases of murder, nor should it necessarily apply in such cases. Some Conservative Members accept that many killings are unpremeditated. Domestic murders, for example, often result from a strong familial relationship that has led to conflict. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is still murder."] None the less, such people will not be deterred by the existence of the death penalty. Perhaps even less acceptable to the general public is the

[Mr. Steve Norris]

certainty that there is no deterrent value in the death penalty for those who are so psychotic or insane that they are wholly unaccountable for their actions. In such cases, the death penalty will make no difference.

Nevertheless, the continued existence of appalling and barbaric crimes in the United Kingdom, the United States and elsewhere is not in question. Recent cases beggar description — for example, the Keith Blakelock case, which must have turned some of the strongest stomachs. If ever there was a case of murder being evil, that was it.

It is perhaps even more sinister that terrorists and paramilitary groups in the United Kingdom, the middle east, north Africa and elsewhere are recruiting young people barely into their teens to carry out appalling crimes for their own strange and convoluted political ends. Such crimes have only one common denominator, as in the Hindawi case: the victims are innocent people. Many women and children will be slain and maimed.

In recent years, there has been a frightening increase both in violent murders and in crimes involving sexual offences, followed by murder, on women, children and elderly people. In addition, there are crimes against the police, who are mostly unarmed who endeavour to protect the most vulnerable in our society from such violence. It is against that background that we must consider what society and Parliament can do to reverse the tide of violence.

We must ensure that those who are contemplating offences of this nature are certain that the likelihood of their being apprehended and convicted is considerable. Any system of penalties that does not take account of the need for certainty of conviction to be present in the mind of the criminal is of no avail. Certainty of conviction must be paramount.

We have also to consider whether the existence of the death penalty would be likely to deter. Of course there would be many who would still commit the crime of murder and who would not be deterred. Young terrorists are being intimidated by the paramilitary groups into running little errands on their behalf, which lead to greater involvement in terrorist offences and eventually to murder. Furthermore, there are the mindless muggers, the vandals, the casual thugs and the calculating professional criminals who go out with a gun in their hand either to frighten or to use it to kill. Given that nowadays a life sentence rarely means more than 10 years, the possession of a firearm is not worth worrying about, so they decide that they might as well take a gun with them.

I refuse to believe that in those groups, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said in a powerful speech, there will be a number of people who will not be deterred by the existence of the death penalty. In his opening speech my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport pointed out that that number will be significantly greater than those who are deterred by the prospect of so-called life imprisonment. Almost by definition, those who are deterred cannot be detected. A few moments ago that conclusion was derided, but were we to compare the present murder rate with what happened over 20 years ago we should have to assume that the only factor in the equation that has changed is the existence or otherwise of the death penalty. Were we not to draw that conclusion, we should have to ignore all the social developments of the last 20 years. The common sense conclusion that the vast majority of ordinary people will draw is that some people would be deterred by the existence of the death penalty.

As for pubic opinion, I am as opposed to a referendum as I am in favour of capital punishment. I do not believe that the course that was advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) is appropriate. I believe in the supremacy of Parliament. I believe, too, that all hon. Members are representatives, not delegates. My hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) said that we have to accept that the moral authority of Parliament, which is based on public acceptance of the supremacy of Parliament, is seriously jeopardised if it consistently ignores the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the citizens.

Since abolition, the British people have had over 20 years in which to consider the implications of this issue. What is now being proposed was not in existence at that time. We cannot turn back the clock, and those who have tabled the new clause do not propose to do so. This issue is beyond politics. It is beyond party and class. There is a very real sense of frustration by the British people bordering on anger at Parliament's patronising, "We know better" attitude.

Tonight, this House has an opportunity to take just a small step, but not the only step, to combat and punish serious violent crime. However, that step expresses, in the clearest and most unequivocal way, society's abhorrence of premeditated and evil murder. Capital punishment will certainly deter a number of offenders. It is a step which would be massively welcomed in every quarter of this land, and I commend it warmly to the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 230, Noes 342.

Division No. 132] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Cash, William
Aitken, Jonathan	Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Alexander, Richard	Chope, Christopher
Amess, David	Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Arnold, Tom	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Aspinwall, Jack	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Cockeram, Eric
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Colvin, Michael
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Coombs, Simon
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Cormack, Patrick
Baldry, Tony	Corrie, John
Batiste, Spencer	Dickens, Geoffrey
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Dicks, Terry
Beggs, Roy	Dover, Den
Bellingham, Henry	du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Bendall, Vivian	Dunn, Robert
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic	Durant, Tony
Bevan, David Gilroy	Eggar, Tim
Bigg-Davison, Sir John	Emery, Sir Peter
Blackburn, John	Eyre, Sir Reginald
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Fallon, Michael
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Farr, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Favell, Anthony
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Boyson, Dr Rhodes	Fookes, Miss Janet
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Bright, Graham	Forth, Eric
Brinton, Tim	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Fox, Sir Marcus
Browne, John	Fry, Peter
Butcher, John	Gale, Roger
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Galley, Roy
Carttiss, Michael	Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*

Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
McCusker, Harold
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Wm. *(Londonderry E)*
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'lch N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Mr. Peter Bruinvels and
Mr. James Pawsey.

Tellers for the Ayes:

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosemary
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Benyon, William
Bermingham, Gerald
Best, Keith
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Anthony
Body, Sir Richard
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crouch, David
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Ellis, Raymond
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Fletcher, Sir Alexander
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Gow, Ian
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heffer, Eric S.
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*

Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lilley, Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCartney, Hugh
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Major, John
Mallon, Seamus
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Prior, Rt Hon James
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Matthew
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Walters, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Watson, John
Weetch, Ken
Wheeler, John
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Couchman and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly negatived.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Criminal Justice Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

10.16 pm

Mr. Hurd: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House has spent two long days on the concluding stages of the Bill and I should like to draw our consideration of it briefly to a conclusion.

The Bill contains much heavy matter and many different subjects, each of which might have justified a Bill of its own, and I shall not go through its contents. Naturally there has been controversy—sometimes it has been sharp—and this has occurred sometimes between parties and sometimes between laymen and learned Members. I am sure that the Bill has benefited from the examination that we have given it.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is noted for his sharp sword or razor, and I do not think that he will take it amiss when I say that he has shown once more a clear and constructive grasp of how Parliament should get to work on a Bill of this sort. The same is true of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). I pay particular thanks to my hon. and hon. and learned Friends for sustaining the burden of the argument, and a special thanks to my hon. Friends the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State, who have borne the great share of the work.

The Bill goes now to another place and their Lordships will consider it carefully in the knowledge that no guillotine has been imposed upon it in this place. The Bill does not go to the other place with the bloodstains of the faithful Commons upon the papers. Each matter has been carefully weighed more than once, and I am sure that in doing its duty as the second Chamber it will bear that in mind.

I take this opportunity to correct an error which I made in the earlier part of the day in the debate on the new clause moved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival). In referring to Mr. Mervyn Russell, whose conviction for murder was quashed several years after he had been sent to prison, and developing the matter, I referred inadvertently to the quashing of the conviction several years after his execution. I must correct that slip of the tongue. The right hon. Member for Gorton got it right, and I intended to say that Mr. Russell was one

of a number of persons whose conviction had been quashed since the abolition of capital punishment and who might have been liable to execution but for abolition.

10.20 pm

Mr. Kaufman: I would like to join the Home Secretary in sending the Bill to the House of Lords in the hope that that House can complete the necessary corrections that we were unable to make in the House of Commons.

This Bill has many good parts and I agree with the Home Secretary that it has been improved as a result of the proper and sensible consideration given to it in Committee. I would like to thank my hon. Friends who have shared with me the burden of dealing with the Bill and who have assisted to ensure that the Bill is properly considered and improved. I would also like to thank the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State who, for Conservatives, have managed the Bill very well. I believe that they now understand the way in which Government and Opposition, while in no way abandoning their differences, can co-operate to improve the legislation.

Although there are matters in which we would like some improvement and although I do not approve of what goes on along the Corridor, I nevertheless hope that, while the other place is around, it will restore peremptory challenge. On that basis, I would like to thank everyone involved for helping us to work so well on the Bill.

10.21 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: I should like to thank the Home Secretary and other Ministers for their great courtesy, forbearance, help and willingness to listen during the passage of the Bill. As in the case of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, every single clause and every schedule was considered, and that is how it should be with Bills that deal with criminal justice policy.

I also thank the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and his hon. Friends for their assistance. I hope that we have assisted one another from time to time, when needs must, during the passage of the Bill.

Although I should like to see some improvements to the legislation in the Lords, I believe that it contains considerable improvements to the law and I look forward to those improvements being put into effect.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Ambulance Service, Northumbria

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

10.22 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): It is somewhat regrettable that I am forced to detain the House for another half hour. I would like it to be known that this is only the second time in 23 years that I have sought an Adjournment debate. Therefore, I do not take the matter lightly when deciding upon a subject for an Adjournment debate.

I wish to draw the Minister's attention to the deterioration and decline in the Northumbria ambulance service. I speak with some knowledge about the ambulance service because, on 5 July 1948 when the National Health Service Act came into being, I was a founder member of the Northumberland ambulance service committee. Out of the shambles of the post-war period we were able to create an efficient organisation from scratch and that service was extended to include the Tyne and Wear metropolitan county council area. That reorganisation was carried out with the minimum of fuss.

The breakdown in that excellent organisation started when the present chief of the ambulance service decided on what was euphemistically called an efficiency campaign. That was two years ago and since then the service has virtually collapsed. It is the source of bitterness and cynicism among the electorate of the area and all quarters of the populace are fed up with the whole business.

Public concern was such that the 10 councils within the area of the administration of the ambulance service decided to fund and conduct an independent public inquiry. That was decided upon because they could not get the regional health authority or the ambulance committee to take seriously the bitter complaints that were being received not merely by Members of Parliament but by other leaders within the community. They were forced to do that.

An independent committee was set up with some excellent members. It was fortunate in having Lord Ennals as chairman, the former Secretary of State for Social Services, and its membership comprised Mr. Alan Fisher, former general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees, Mr. Malcolm Collett, principal lecturer in medical sociology at Newcastle upon Tyne university and Mr. Sidney Grahame, technical adviser and former chief ambulance officer for Gateshead and Sunderland. Those men had some knowledge of that vital sector of public service.

That independent committee took evidence from a variety of sources. It published its report in the spring of last year. I regret to say that, although the Government were informed of the report and given copies of it, no response has been received. There was very little response from the regional health authority or the ambulance committee. Indeed, the recommendations in the report, to my knowledge, have never been implemented. I believe that they have been ignored.

The service continued to decline from that time. Local Members of Parliament, doctors and the general public can all relate negative examples of their experiences of the service. My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) raised the matter in a debate some months ago, but nothing happened.

[Mr. Ted Garrett]

As I have said, the recommendations of the independent inquiry were ignored. Representations by the northern group of Labour Members of Parliament to officials and representatives of the regional health authority were ignored and nothing happened. Petitions with thousands of signatures have been submitted to various sources but nothing has happened. All those matters should have been looked into, but instead we have had some weak promises from some of the officials.

I could go on for some time. I have received hundreds of complaints, as have other hon. Members representing the northern region, not merely Labour Members but members of other parties as well. I can give an example of a complaint that I received last week. A lady should have attended hospital every day for radium therapy. On one day she waited five and a half hours for the ambulance to bring her home after treatment. It is difficult to imagine her physical and mental state during that wait. The following day she waited four hours, but worse was to come. One day when she was ready to go to hospital to receive her daily treatment and after several telephone calls, she was informed at 4.30 in the afternoon that the ambulance would not be coming.

Similar cases abound in the region. The region stretches from Berwick on the border down to the boundaries of Durham and out through Northumberland and Durham to the borders of the Pennines. It is a hugh area and many people depend on the ambulance service. Many people do not have their own cars. In some cases the vehicles for the ambulance service are the sort of vehicles that convey people to hospital with the minimum of inconvenience.

The morale of the staff is at rock bottom. They are threatened if they complain. Very often they are forced to do single manning where, in their judgement, there should be double manning and often, on the two-person system, only one turns up. From what we have gathered in the press and from consultations with union people and ordinary members of the public, it seems that joint consultation by the officials and representatives of the union is a mockery.

The scale of frustration, anxiety, misery and fear that has been imposed on the people within the area of the ambulance service is a public affront to the people and requires urgent action. It is a shame that a service that was admired for its pride and efficiency has deteriorated to the extent that it has.

I urge the Minister to use the powers that he has to make a clean sweep of the people responsible for the collapse of the service. The hon. Gentleman must therefore request the resignation of the chairman of the ambulance committee and its members. He must request the resignation of the chief ambulance officer and the two people with higher responsibilities—the chairman of the regional health authority and the senior administrator. If they refuse to resign, he should use the powers available to him to seek their dismissal. I am confident that they will be replaced by people who will put human needs before bureaucratic needs. I urge the Minister once again to act decisively to end this shameful abuse of bureaucratic powers over the people of the north-east.

10.31 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) for introducing this important subject on the Adjournment. It is important to many of our constituents, certainly to those of my hon. Friends who are now here. My hon. Friends the Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) have had many letters and complaints from their constituents since the so-called reorganisation of the ambulance service. We as a northern group have met several times. We have had meetings with Professor Tomlinson, the chairman of the Northern health authority, and with Mr. Caple, the chief ambulance officer—and all to no avail.

We have had continuous complaints since the so-called reorganisation of the ambulance service. Over recent weeks, I have had three serious complaints about the service in our area. One involved one of my constituents, who had a serious chest complaint, was in hospital and was discharged. She went on a non-emergency ambulance back to her house. When she got back, she was laid on the bed and her husband was told, as she could not get her breath, to open the windows and doors. That lady died 10 minutes after she was taken out of the ambulance.

In the second case, one of my constituents, a 76-year-old man who had just had a stroke, had to go to hospital. I have the appointment card here. He was supposed to be picked up by ambulance at 11.30 am. The ambulance turned up at 9 am. It could not go back again. The man had to telephone for his daughter, and she had to take him to hospital.

These cases have happened only in recent weeks. If I were to tell of all the cases since reorganisation, I could go on all night. In the third case, the person had been in hospital, where he was seriously ill, for 13 days. His stepfather was told that he was to be discharged at 10 am the following day. The family went to the hospital; the ambulance had been ordered for 11 am. The family sat with the person in the waiting room all day. At 5 o'clock, no ambulance had arrived. The family had to ring the daughter, and get her from work and to come down in her car to take the person home. He was seriously ill when he got home, mostly as a result of having to wait for the ambulance to arrive. Two days later, that person died.

My constituents are irate about the ambulance service in our area. The so-called reorganisation is a disgrace. It is an unmitigated disaster. Talking to Mr. Capel, the chief ambulance officer, is a waste of time. All one gets are platitudes and excuses. I have no doubt that my hon. Friends who are present could echo such complaints.

I thought that the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), would reply to the debate. We know that the hon. Lady has made certain comments about health in the north. However, if we compare the hon. Lady with Mr. Caple, the hon. Lady looks like Florence Nightingale.

That is the position in the area. It is time something was done. It is time that the Minister took note of the comments raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend and had a thorough investigation to sort out those people who have disorganised the ambulance service in our area.

10.34 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I begin by responding to the last remark. I am sorry to have deprived the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) of the pleasure of having my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security in his

direct sights. I should explain that my hon. Friend was faced with some difficulty in being able to respond to the debate tonight and I thought that it would be appropriate if I responded.

I am happy to have the opportunity to discuss the matter with hon. Members. I appreciate the strength of feeling. Although I have not checked the statistics mentioned by the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), I have no reason to doubt his word that he is an infrequent raiser of matters on the Adjournment of the House. I fully accept that that reflects the importance that he attaches to the matter. I note that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) is in the Chamber and I know that he has raised this matter before on the Adjournment. I am also aware that the hon. Member for Jarrow has been concerned about this for some time. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is present and I know that he takes a considerable interest in this matter.

The difficulty that I face in answering tonight has two parts. First, a number of specific instances were raised in the past few minutes by the hon. Member for Jarrow upon which necessarily I am not able to comment off the cuff. However, I will see what further information I can gain from the authority about the particular cases raised by the hon. Member for Jarrow if they can be identified from the information he has provided on the Floor of the House or should he wish to give me further information to enable me to seek the authority's comments.

I am conscious that I must resist some part of the thrust of the comments made by the hon. Members for Wallsend and for Jarrow that the regional health authority and the ambulance service — including the chief ambulance officer — and I do not pretend to be quoting hon. Members accurately; I merely give the flavour of what they said—have persistently refused to respond to some of the points that have been made. I happen to have on file comments made by the regional ambulance officer on 23 December last year in response to a report commissioned by Prudhoe town council. I understand that the report had only been published on 8 December 1986. Frankly, by the standards of central Government, that is a fairly full and detailed response to a report published within not much more than a fortnight of the publication of the original document, and it includes detailed comments on a number of specific cases that had been raised. Whatever else has been said about the response, it constitutes a serious attempt to respond to the criticisms that had been put forward.

It would be less than fair to the authority and the chief ambulance officer on the evidence of the papers that I have concerning this matter, not to acknowledge that an attempt to respond has been made. However, I fully understand in the light of what hon. Members have said, that that response has not satisfied them or manifestly, on the basis of what they say, some of their constituents.

I cannot make immediate comment on specific cases although I will undertake to have those cases examined. It is right to record that according to the papers that I have, response has been made to particular cases and points that have been raised in reports in the past. I may refer to that point later.

The second difficulty that I face is perhaps closer to the fundamentals of the case put forward today. As has been acknowledged on both sides, this is not the first occasion on which the Northumbria ambulance service has been discussed in the House. I have looked at the report of the last debate and noted the undertaking given by the then Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). He said that he did not expect standards to be reduced but rather that they would be improved, and he referred to early evidence that efficiency of response in terms of emergency ambulance services had improved rather than deteriorated. All the evidence that I have seen from the intervening period confirms that in response to emergency demands the Northumbria ambulance service has improved its record. I will give some of the statistics in a moment. Against that background, I must confess to some puzzlement about the reasons for raising the subject again today. At any rate, I start from the position that in my judgment the northern regional health authority, which is responsible for the running of the service, has sought to allay the fears expressed, has been monitoring the service provided and aims to maintain what appears to have been an improvement and to make further improvements.

I justify my comments about what appears to have happened on the basis of statistical evidence of improvement especially in the emergency service since the restructuring began. The statistics show clearly that ambulances are getting to emergency cases faster and that within six months of the closure of Prudhoe ambulance station 95 per cent. of emergency response times were within 20 minutes, compared with 73 per cent. before—an increase of more than a quarter and not far short of a third. In the period 1 October to 25 November 1986—the latest figures available to me—all emergency calls in the Prudhoe area were responded to within 14 minutes, which is better than the standard set by the Department for areas of that kind and reflects the fact that even in the usual areas the regional health authority has deliberately set standards which are more commonly expected in the metropolitan areas with their closer-knit populations and generally shorter journey times. I understand that even the people campaigning for the reopening of Prudhoe ambulance station, which is part of the background to today's debate, acknowledge that in this respect the service has improved since restructuring. They believe that there is room for further improvements, and that may well be so. I should be the last to say that I regarded any ambulance service as having achieved perfection, and I hope that any authority concerned with services of this kind will seek to maintain and in every possible way to strengthen its efforts to ensure that the service is as efficient as it possibly can be.

With those figures in mind—I am not aware that anyone has seriously disputed the improvement in response times to emergencies which has taken place in the Northumbria ambulance service since restructuring—I am somewhat puzzled at the extent to which the concern persists. I do not dispute the fact that it persists—if it did not, hon. Members would not be here for this debate.

Mr. Garrett: The station referred to is Prudhoe, which is in the constituency of the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon). He has complained bitterly. The fact is that there are people who have examined the statistics presented by the chief ambulance officer, people who are statisticians and who have disputed those figures from that area.

However, I would like to point out that my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and I come from

[Mr. Garrett]

heavily industrialised areas. Prudhoe is an urban/rural area where there is less congestion of the roads. In my car I have checked some of those times and again, keeping within the permitted speed limits, I have found that those figures understate the times.

Mr. Newton: I think that I must simply undertake to note the point that the hon. Gentleman has made, and also to apologise if I had mistaken one of the thrusts of the case that he was seeking to make. My file is stuffed with reports about the Prudhoe ambulance station. Given that it was adverted to by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington in the previous debate as well, perhaps we over-estimated the extent to which that particular controversy was part of the concern that was to be reflected by the hon. Gentleman. But given that he has made it clear that he is anxious to steer the discussion on to more general ground and to relate it to the performance of the ambulance service throughout the area, let me make a number of points which are related to the performance and improvement in efficiency, as I would judge it, and also the quality and useage, of the Northumbria ambulance service fleet during the period in question.

On the figures available to me, it is certainly the case that the substantial manpower resources deployed in this service are now being better used than previously. When comparing the ratio of vehicle crew staff to patient movements—and I am conscious that measurements of this kind always sound bureaucratic, but we must have some kind of measure of the way in which resources are used—the restructured service, in manpower terms, has increased its productivity by 12·3 per cent. Putting those figures into somewhat more manageable terms, in 1982-83, for each ambulance man or woman employed, 1,312 patients were transported, whereas by 1985-86 that figure had risen by 162 patients to 1,474. Similarly if one looks at what one might call the usage of the fleet itself, I am advised that 32 new vehicles have been introduced, that they include 11 front-line accident and emergency ambulances and 21 patient transport sitting case vehicles. There are 73 fewer vehicles overall than before restructuring, which may sound like a downside case, but the fleet is travelling an increased mileage, and the net result is a substantial increase in the productivity of those employed in the service and a reduction in the costs that would otherwise have been incurred — which means, other things being equal, more money for the health authority to plough into direct patient services in other ways.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I am grateful to the Minister and I am sorry to intervene in the debate of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), but I did tell him what I was going to raise.

The Minister will realise that a lot of things can be hidden behind statistics. In fact, my job used to be hiding things behind statistics. As my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) and others have illustrated, it is the human factors that we are concerned about — the number of times, for example, that I have not had ambulance cover in my constituency, and so on. Would the Minister be prepared to meet the hon. Gentlemen who are here this evening, after he has had a reply from Mr. Caple, so that we can talk about the human aspect of it and not just its statistical aspect?

Mr. Newton: I will consider that. The hon. Gentleman, with whom I have crossed swords in a friendly way many times over the years, knows that my predeliction is always to agree to such a proposition. When I have seen the report from the ambulance officer, if it is the wish of the hon. Gentlemen that we should meet to talk about it further, I shall gladly see whether that can be arranged.

On his comment about seeing this in human terms, I hope that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington will accept that that is what I want to do. Leaving aside the specific cases to which the chief ambulance officer sought to respond in his paper of 23 December 1986, which on the face of it reveals considerable inaccuracy in the accounts of the cases as put to him in the first place, the human effects of the organisation of ambulance services must in the end be judged by the speed of response to emergency cases, which is what most people regard as the first requirement of an ambulance service.

I am not in a position to engage in a complex statistical argument with the hon. Gentlemen about the basis on which the statistics have been constructed, but I have no reason to suppose that they have not been put together in good faith and on a well-established basis. They show that the response time in the Northumbria ambulance service has improved since restructuring. On that basis I cannot yield to the demands of the hon. Member for Wallsend that I should undertake the actions sought of me in his speech.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 2 April 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAYS (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 9 April.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

1. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what impact he expects the tape recordings of police interviews with suspects to have on the efficiency of the police; and whether he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Experience of two years of field trials suggests that tape recording will offer a number of benefits to the police. These include savings in police time through a reduction in the average length of interviews with suspects and a reduction in the number of occasions on which police evidence is called into question in the courts. It was also noted that during the field trials the number of confessions obtained was larger for taped cases than for untaped cases. The intention is now to introduce tape recording nationwide, with complete national coverage by 1991.

Mr. Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that resources will be made available to the police to provide the necessary interview rooms and to meet the requirements of extra transcribing staff, and so on? Will he also confirm that the number of pleas of guilty has increased in the areas in which the project has been monitored?

Mr. Hogg: A total budget of £7 million has been allocated in grant-aid, to be spread over five years between 1986 and 1991. The present evidence — it relates to justices' courts—is that pleas of guilty have increased by 2 per cent.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my hon. Friend aware that all practitioners at the criminal Bar would congratulate the Government on taking this important step for the improvement of justice? It will greatly assist justice in two ways. First, it will speed criminal trials and make sure that waiting lists are shorter. Secondly, it will substantially improve the morale of the police, who will no longer be subjected to cross-examination on the allegation that they are dishonest, when they are not.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. and learned Friend is right in all that he said. We have noticed that there is a substantial reduction in the length of trials, due at least in part to the fact that police interview evidence is not challenged as much as it used to be when untaped evidence was available.

Crime Prevention

2. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to take any new initiatives following the publication on 16 March of the recorded crime figures for 1986.

4. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what place crime prevention has in his overall strategy to reduce crime.

8. **Mr. Blair** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to diminish the crime rate.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The Government plan to intensify their present effort against crime. This includes providing extra resources for the police, prison and probation services, strengthening, where necessary, the powers of the police and the courts, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, and supporting a broad range of crime prevention measures. Crime prevention is an essential element in this strategy.

Mr. Beith: Do not the alarming figures conclusively prove that the Government do not have answers to the law and order problems? Will the Home Secretary enable police forces such as the Northumbria force to recruit up to strength? Will he back community crime prevention schemes, by the greater use of special constables and neighbourhood watch schemes?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman may know that there are now 10,600 more police officers in England and Wales than there were in 1979, and more than 5,000 more civilians working with the police. As part of the phased further expansion of the police I am looking at applications from authorities, one by one, and granting them when it is clear that there are jobs to be done that can be done only by uniformed police officers. There is scope for further use of special constables, for example in helping the police and in helping neighbourhood watch schemes to get off the ground. I am encouraging the spread of good practice in that regard.

Mr. Heddle: I thank my right hon. Friend for increasing the number of policemen on the beat in Staffordshire by 25 in the past few weeks. Does he agree that 95 out of 100 crimes are committed against property rather than against the person? Does he further agree that it is the duty of every individual citizen to endeavour to protect his or her

property in the best way that he or she can? What further initiatives does my right hon. Friend plan to take to ensure that that is done?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. It is not surprising that car thefts are about the fastest growing form of offence, when one in five of us leaves his car unlocked. Of course people need help, and that is why for three years we have been building up a wide range of crime prevention measures, including, for example, funding under the community programmes to the tune of about £35 million. Some 8,000 unemployed people go round helping people like those that my hon. Friend has in mind to make their houses, flats and shops more secure.

Mr. Blair: Is the Home Secretary aware that, for example, in county Durham last year, burglaries rose by over 10 per cent. and that the annual recorded crime over the last six years has risen by 10,000, or over 30 per cent.? Is he also aware that local authorities are hard pressed because of the cuts in block grant, particularly in areas like county Durham? Does he not think that we would be better able to deal with crime and law and order problems if we devoted more resources to law and order and to dealing with the problems of the people at the sharp end, namely, the police and the victims, rather than have the temporary tax cuts of the Budget?

Mr. Hurd: The resources devoted to law and order have increased at a phenomenal rate, starting, admittedly, from the lamentable position that we inherited. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the police. Next year we will spend 50 per cent. more in real terms on the police, including getting more policemen out at the sharp end of policing than we had in 1979. Certainly we need to spend more, and will spend more, on crime prevention. The whole thrust of my answers today and on previous occasions is that if we are serious about reducing the bulk of recorded crime, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) said is crime against property, crime prevention is probably the best way to do it.

Sir Edward Gardner: When my right hon. Friend tries to identify the cause of the increase in recorded crime, especially crime concerning property, will he bear in mind the dreadful effect of the use of drugs that is reflected in the crime figures? Does he agree that, for example, in America 60 per cent. of all crimes against property are attributable to the taking and misuse of hard drugs?

Mr. Hurd: I am quite clear that more and more crimes, including a lot of minor crime, such as petty pilfering, is inspired by the need to finance drug taking. Therefore, as my hon. and learned Friend says, there is a clear link between what we are doing on crime prevention and what my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office and his colleagues are doing in our campaign against drug abuse.

Mr. Duffy: Does the Home Secretary think that the most immediate and urgent contribution that he could make to crime prevention would be to undertake to make representations to the chairman of the IBA about the reported plans of Mr. Jeremy Isaacs for late-night viewing on Channel 4 and an increased output of sex and violence? Can the Home Secretary think of anything that is more likely to assure the continued degradation of our society?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman feels that that is important—and he may well be right—he will have an opportunity tomorrow to vote for the Second Reading of the private Member's Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), which would remove the broadcasting exemption which at the moment puts broadcasters in a different and privileged position in this regard from those who publish books or magazines.

Mr. Nicholls: In so far as my right hon. Friend is looking for new initiatives, is he attracted by the idea of political control of the police as set out in, "These are Liberal Policies 1986"? If it is such a good idea, can my right hon. Friend suggest why the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) did not mention it?

Mr. Hurd: The Liberals are worried about this, as they are worried about many of their policies. I have been in some rather opaque correspondence with Mrs. Shirley Williams on this subject and she seems to be rowing back, if that is the correct phrase, rather fast from the kind of harebrained schemes that the Liberal party espouses. It is only fair to say that last year's proposals by the Liberals are but a pale shadow of folly compared to the official Labour proposals of this year.

Mr. Kaufman: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that any correspondence between him and Mrs. Shirley Williams is the bland leading the bland? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was not bad.

Mr. Kaufman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This afternoon the Home Secretary enunciated the new doctrine that crime is the fault of the victim. As there have been 25 million crime victims since the Government took office, and that in the 40 minutes of Home Office Question Time today 330 crimes will have been committed, including — [Hon. Members: "Oh, no."] Yes, hon. Members should groan. Those crimes will include 10 acts of violence against the person, 10 acts of fraud, 46 acts of criminal damage, 70 burglaries and 163 thefts. In view of those facts, when will the Home Secretary stop waffling about crime and at least try to reduce it to the level at which the Labour Government left it in 1979?

Mr. Hurd: What the right hon. Gentleman is doing, although not so far in this House, is setting out to the press his party's plans to reduce the prison population by 20,000 over the lifetime of a Parliament. He can do that only by writing a burglars' charter. There are 10,100 burglars in prison, of whom 3,000 have convictions for 11 or more offences. The right hon. Gentleman will not achieve his figures for the prison population unless he prevents the courts from sending burglars to prison.

Mr. Hayes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Harlow last year crimes of burglary decreased by 2·2 per cent. and that crime increased overall by 0·3 per cent.? Is he further aware that so far this year crimes of burglary in Harlow have decreased by 5·5 per cent.? Will he take this opportunity to thank the police force in Harlow for looking after my constituents so well, particularly for having the highest detection rate in Essex?

Mr. Hurd: I shall certainly do that, but my hon. Friend is not alone in that experience. For example, in the borough of Wandsworth, part of which is represented by the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), residential burglaries decreased by 600 last year. I suspect that that has something to do with the fact that neighbourhood watch schemes in that borough rose from 375 to 558.

Prison Overcrowding

3. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new proposals he has for alleviating overcrowding in Her Majesty's prisons.

7. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

13. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he takes to monitor the efficacy of his proposals to reduce overcrowding amongst the prison population; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: On 27 March 1987 the total prison population of all types in England and Wales was 49,071. We are taking vigorous steps to add prison places and to make the best use of existing places, where necessary by changing establishments' functions. We are maintaining our building programme, of which we are now beginning to see the first fruits. We continue to encourage the courts to make use of non-custodial sentences in suitable cases.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Home Secretary aware that the redesignation of prisons in Yorkshire and Humberside, which harmed the provision for young offenders, plus the opening of Lindholme prison near Doncaster, have done virtually nothing to alleviate the gross overcrowding at Leeds prison? Surely something more dramatic is required than simply trying to shift the numbers round Yorkshire and Humberside if the appalling conditions at Armley are to be improved?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that Leeds is one of the local prisons that is substantially overcrowded, although it has been considerably relieved by the decision that was made about Hull last year. However, as our prison building programme continues to produce new places, I hope, though this depends to a certain extent on the number of people whom the courts send to prison, that the points of pressure, of which Leeds is certainly one, will steadily be relieved.

Mr. Knox: If the number of people in prison continues to rise, as it has in recent years, is there not a great danger that the new prison building programme will merely accommodate extra prisoners and do nothing to deal with the overcrowding problem?

Mr. Hurd: That is one reason why we are continuing and maintaining, not only the prison building programme of 20 new prisons, but our plans for refurbishing and modernising 100 existing establishments, many of which are Victorian. Our aim is partly to accommodate the growing number of criminals whom the courts send to prison. However, as my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, part of that aim must be to reduce the overcrowding, which in some, but not all, of our prisons is a disgrace and is the direct responsibility of the insouciant way in which our Labour predecessors including the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), neglected entirely, because there were no votes in it, the proper development of the prison estate.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the massive overcrowding in Leicester prison, which was built to hold 203 inmates and currently holds 415? Will he pay an official visit to see for himself the problems there? Will he confirm that those who are on charges of murder or rape should not be allowed bail, although there may be overcrowding in certain prisons?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's figures are right. We plan to provide some relief soon by transferring to Glen Parva remand centre Leicester's responsibility for assessing and allocating sentenced prisoners. The opening of Littlehey prison and the conversion of Ashwell prison from an open to a closed prison later this year will provide further relief.

I note what my hon. Friend said about remand. Together with an hon. Friend, I visited the Leicester bail hostel recently, which, because of its good work in coping with unconvicted prisoners, helps to relieve some of the pressure on Leicester prison. Even my hon. Friend would find that acceptable and common sense.

Mr. Chris Smith: Is the Home Secretary aware that as a direct result of overcrowding in the main prisons in the London area many remand prisoners are kept in cells in magistrates courts and police stations, sometimes for weeks at a time? Some women, for example, are being kept at Highbury Corner magistrates court cells with no access to daylight or fresh air and with inadequate visiting facilities, sometimes for two or three weeks. Is that not a disgrace? Instead of talking, what will the Home Secretary do about it?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, it certainly is a disgrace — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I get irked by the way in which Opposition Members wash their hands of all responsibility for this situation when, as my predecessors in those Governments now acknowledge, for years, while the courts were continually sending more people to prison, they did virtually nothing to improve the conditions in the prisons or to increase the number of prison places.

It takes about seven years to build a prison. We are just now beginning, last year and in the latter part of this year, to benefit from the brave decisions taken by my predecessor Lord Whitelaw when he came to office. The hon. Gentleman's point about police cells is right. It is thoroughly unsatisfactory and wrong, and we want to move away from that as soon as we can.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Home Secretary accept that in the past eight years the past two Education, Science and Arts Select Committees have studied education in prisons and have constantly uncovered the facts that gross overcrowding in prisons causes disruption and that there is insufficient money for the education of prisoners? We are constantly told that the building programme will solve the problem, but it is nowhere near doing that. The only answer is to spend far more money educating prisoners who are asking for education and to build more new prisons so that prisoners are not living on top of each other.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman should have a word with his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), one item in whose proposals is to halt the prison building programme. I cannot imagine anything more irresponsible. The hon. Gentleman made a serious point. I hope that if we can succeed with the fresh start proposals, which we now have a better chance of doing thanks to some constructive negotiations with the POA and governors, resources will be available to provide more staff and better regimes, including more space and time for education. I fully understand the importance of that.

Sir Peter Emery: Why does it take seven years to build a prison? Should we not consider privatising them and getting them built in three or four years?

Mr. Hurd: There are several reasons why it takes seven years to build a prison. About the first two years are spent discussing proposals with local authorities and local residents, who say that they are in favour of the prison building programme so long as it does not take place in their town or county. The process is a long one, and my hon. Friend is on an interesting trail. I am looking forward to the Select Committee report that will bear on this. I do not believe in privatising prisons if that means transferring the ownership, for example of Dartmoor, to a private company. I do not think that my hon. Friend has that in mind. I am interested in any ideas which, by using private enterprise, cut short the time for building a prison.

Mr. Soley: When will the Home Secretary stop dodging his responsibilities? He knows that this country locks up more people than any other country in Western Europe. He also knows that, under this Government, the crime rate has risen faster than in any other comparable country and faster than under any previous Labour or Tory Government. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not put money into crime prevention and victim support instead of throwing public money into a prison building programme that will not solve the problem this century or next century?

Mr. Hurd: We are the first Government who have put the emphasis on crime prevention and now on victim support. I am glad that, to some extent, we have the support of the Labour party on this. I say to some extent because of the disgraceful way in which some London boroughs, not the hon. Gentleman's, obstruct neighbourhood watch schemes and prevent the police from getting crime prevention under way. As a London Member of Parliament the hon. Gentleman would be better advised to encourage some London boroughs to follow the line that his borough of Hammersmith and Fulham initiated when it was under Tory control.

Mr. Dickens: As our prisons are overcrowded, will my right hon. Friend consider a system whereby, instead of giving prisoners remission for good conduct, we give them longer sentences for misbehaving? Does he not consider that such a system would be so unacceptable to people that they would start to behave themselves and that would soon empty the prisons?

Mr. Hurd: I believe that the immediate effect would be a substantial increase in the prison population. It is not a path that I am tempted to go down.

Burglary

5. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to improve the clear-up rate for burglary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Operational decisions about the investigation of specific offences are a matter for chief constables, but I know that in the case of burglary a number of forces are using screening techniques to try to improve clear-up rates by targeting resources. However, most burglary is opportunistic and there is therefore considerable scope for preventive action—a point which is being enhanced in current crime prevention publicity.

Mr. Fatchett: Given the appalling increase in the number of burglaries since the Government came to office, would it not now be sensible for the Government to reconsider the limitations on spending experienced in the metropolitan counties after the abolition of the metropolitan authorities? That has resulted in problems, such as in the West Yorkshire, where senior police officials have had to spend time persuading the Home Office and the Department of the Environment to spend more money on the police, when the Labour-controlled authorities wanted to spend that money. I suspect that the ratepayers shared that desire. That time would be more effectively spent with additional resources and more police on the ground. That would be a better way of detecting more burglaries and of making sure that we do not get the petty political interference in the police that we have experienced under the Government.

Mr. Hogg: I have heard a number of silly interventions while I have been in my present job, but that is one of the sillier ones. I would remind the hon. Gentleman that, in 1987-88, we intend to spend 46 per cent. more, in real terms, on the police service than was spent in 1978-79. I also remind the hon. Gentleman that, at the moment, the police service strength is about 16,000 more than it was when the Labour party was last in power.

Sir Peter Hordern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to improve detection rates of crime and burglary is to increase the number of police on the ground? Does he also agree that, because of some unfortunate oversight, the number of police in Sussex is to be reduced to improve the numbers guarding Gatwick airport? Since Gatwick airport is a national responsibility and is separately provided for by the British Airports Authority, can my hon. Friend give us an assurance that the number of police in Sussex will be reconsidered sympathetically?

Mr. Hogg: I have a great deal of respect for my hon. Friend, who argues his corner with great lucidity. He is always courteous, but not always wholly right. He will appreciate that the process of civilianisation over the past 12 months or so, together with the increase in recruiting in Sussex, has put on to the beat about an extra 100 men.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister note that one reported burglary takes place every 34 seconds in England and Wales? Is he aware that the clear-up rate for burglary is only 27 in every 100? Does he accept the chilling view of Mr. Mike Hough, a senior Home Office crime expert, that the police cannot solve everyday crime and that people are now on their own? Does that not mean that our homes and streets are being left to the burglars and muggers?

Mr. Hogg: The Labour party is having a jolly time kicking own goals today, because, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to remember, in 1986 the number of residential burglaries cleared up rose by 5 per cent. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) is proposing to clear the prison population by 10,000 in the first year of a Labour Government, and by 20,000 by the end of the Parliament. That would mean liberating into the community a very large number of professional burglars.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

6. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the effect of neighbourhood watch schemes on the level of crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Where police forces have been able to isolate crime figures for areas covered by individual schemes the results have indicated that well-run schemes can reduce the level of local crime.

Mr. Soames: Is my hon. Friend aware that 96 per cent. of all recorded crime is against property? In the light of the appalling figures, does he agree that we need a national crusade against crime, engaging every part of the community? Does he agree that neighbourhood watch schemes have an important part to play?

Mr. Hogg: I do indeed. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his advocacy and I note with particular pleasure that in the county of Sussex, which he represents so well, there were 350 neighbourhood watch schemes in October 1986 and that that number has increased to 1,903. Taking a broader perspective, there are now 28,500 neighbourhood watch schemes in the country, which means that the number has trebled in the last year.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Is the Minister aware that I fully support neighbourhood watch schemes, of which there are many in the Northumbria police area? Is he further aware that since 1978 burglary in that area has increased by 83 per cent.? That means that we have a burglary every 10 minutes. Is it not time that the Minister increased Northumbria's police establishment and that the police got their backsides out of panda cars and their feet on the beat?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support of neighbourhood watch. I am not in the least suprised, because he will know of the neighbourhood watch scheme at Millfield and Fawdon in his county, where offences of burglary and car theft have been reduced by 25 per cent.

Mr. Hill: Is my hon. Friend aware that in many areas neighbourhood watch schemes are not making good progress? In my county of Hampshire progress is slow. Is my hon. Friend aware that some of the crimes which neighbourhood watch should be able to detect remain unobserved? Is he aware of the serious problem of the bogus water inspector, the bogus electricity inspector and the bogus health inspector? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hill: Is my hon. Friend aware of the bogus officials who call on pensioners, ransack their houses and steal their life savings? Does he agree that more attention should be paid to that problem by the police within the neighbourhood watch schemes?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend's constituents must also be warned about the bogus politicians who sit on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Dubs: I accept that neighbourhood watch schemes have a part to play in crime prevention, but do they not represent the totality of the Government's crime prevention policies? Is it not time that we had more action, a positive strategy and a real sense of commitment?

May I be helpful to the Minister and the Home Secretary? I have in my possession a document on crime prevention which deals with how to make neighbourhoods safe, how to provide crime prevention grants for owner-occupiers and tenants and how to help victims. That will form the basis of the next Labour Government's policy. If the Minister wants to start implementing that policy now, he is welcome to the document.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member is an awfully nice chap, but he really must not laugh when he talks about the next Labour Government. I know that he does not believe that it is going to happen, but he should not make his disbelief so apparent. Another own goal! The Government are spending £50 million a year, or rather more, on crime prevention, very much along the lines which the hon. Gentleman has suggested.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend commend the encouragement given by the Cheshire constabulary to the setting up of neighbourhood watch schemes in Cheshire, and particularly commend Major Hugh Thornburn and the Alderley Edge parish council, which have recently, in conjunction and co-operation with the Cheshire constabulary, held an oustandingly successful neighbourhood watch scheme exhibition and seminar, which was widely supported by the public in the area?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend's intervention only makes plain what we already knew, that he is a really formidable constituency Member. Praise from him is infinitely more valuable than praise from me.

Community Radio Broadcasts

9. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the proposed regulatory system for community radio broadcasts.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): We have so far received one letter commenting on the system of regulation proposed in the Green Paper published in February.

Mr. Freud: How practicable does the Minister think it would be to control the political input into community broadcasting?

Mr. Mellor: Very practicable.

Mr. Hanley: Will my hon. Friend assure the House that, whatever system of community broadcasting is finally decided upon, he will make sure that there is proper provision for the linguistic groups within our society?

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Cruelty to Animals

10. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received regarding the workings of the legislation relating to cruelty to animals and what reply he has sent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are making it clear, in reply to a number of representations that we have received recently, that the Government are wholeheartedly committed to combating cruelty to animals. We support the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) to double the maximum penalties under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. We have given careful thought to the proposal that the police

should have a power of entry to investigate allegations of cruelty to animals, but this would not be appropriate. We are looking carefully and sympathetically at other proposals for changes to the legislation.

Mr. Latham: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that the proposals put forward by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to modernise the 76-year old Act of Parliament are generally very constructive? Will he give an assurance that these are being seriously considered in the Department with a view to some action being taken on this matter?

Mr. Hogg: This issue is of the greatest importance, and therefore the Government are giving urgent and sympathetic consideration to what we can do to improve protection for animals. We are, to start with, considering extending the banning powers. The question is whether we can also extend the protection under the 1911 Act without at the same time putting at risk legitimate country sports. I shall not in any way support measures that will put those at risk. But yes, this is a very important matter.

Mr. Heffer: Does that mean that the Government, in looking into the question of cruelty to animals, are continuing to accept that there should be hare coursing, stag hunting and fox hunting? Is that not a contradiction in terms? If it is agreed that we should look into the question of cruelty to animals, surely we should also decide that the time has come to get rid of these so-called sports?

Mr. Hogg: I make no apology for explaining my own personal position. I have always enjoyed and participated in country sports, including shooting and fishing. I make no apology whatsoever for that. In a democratic society people have a right to do that and there is no way that I would seek to surrender that right.

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis

11. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis; and what was discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I last met the Commissioner on Wednesday 18 March, together with representatives of the London local authority associations, when we discussed his strategy for 1987.

Mr. Hughes: I wonder whether the Home Secretary discussed with the Commissioner the crime figures in inner London in general, and in the borough of Southwark in particular, and whether he is aware that the increase in the figures has been horrendous? There has been an 11 per cent. increase in criminal damage, a 14 per cent. increase in a year in sexual offences and a 20 per cent. increase in a year in burglary and going equipped. At the same time, the detection rate has dropped from 14 to 10 per cent. What strategy have the Home Office and the Commissioner for reassuring the citizens of an inner London borough such as mine that they will be better protected against the criminal in the years to come?

Mr. Hurd: Part of the answer is an increase in the strength of the Metropolitan police. The hon. Member will have seen the latest figures, which show the increase in establishment that I have just authorised and the way in which the Metropolitan police are recruiting up to that. That is part of the answer. The rest of the answer, particularly in the hon. Member's part of the world, is to get together all the agencies, including the public and private sector agencies and organisations, in the fight against crime.

Crime (15 to 16-Year-Olds)

12. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what special steps are being taken to curb the high incidence of crime committed by 15 to 16-year-olds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have encouraged many local initiatives, and a working group of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention has been set up to deal specifically with reducing juvenile crime.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Has my hon. Friend seen the recent remarks of the chief constable of Thames Valley, who said that the greater involvement of the police through the crime prevention element of the schools programme, the fewer the number of children who became involved in crime? If that is so, what pressure can he bring to bear on those local education authorities which refuse to allow the police to lecture in their schools?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend has made a very important point. It is vital that the police have the opportunity to go into schools and spread the message about crime prevention. Far too many Labour authorities are preventing the police from carrying out that essential task.

Mr. Ashton: Does the Minister think that abolishing the dole for teenagers who refuse to go on youth training schemes will increase, or reduce, crime? Is he aware that it now costs £327 a week to keep a teenager in prison, but only £18·40 a week when he is on the dole?

Mr. Hogg: I would be rather more impressed by that question if it were not true that the Labour-dominated borough of Haringey had issued about 25,000 passes, called "bust passes", telling schoolchildren not to co-operate with the police if they are stopped.

Mr. Key: Does my hon. Friend agree that the public get no satisfaction from seeing hon. Members hurling about insults over crime statistics? If we wish to get to the bottom of this, we must consider the problem of television at a time when children of school age watch television for more hours than they are in school. Is it not true that the best way that we can proceed with this matter is by supporting the private Member's Bill tomorrow?

Mr. Hogg: I agree with the conclusion and also echo what my hon. Friend said, that we—especially those in the Labour party—tend to underestimate the duties of schools and parents in this area.

Pick-Pocketing (London)

14. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to seek to deal with pick-pocketing in London in the light of the recent increase in its incidence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner's strategy for 1987 highlighted his determination to tackle street crime. I understand that this includes pick-pocketing and that additional resources have been provided to help to combat the problem. In particular, territorial operations support groups were formed in January and each division has been authorised to form a divisional crime squad to combat street crime, including pick-pocketing.

Mr. Clarke: Although the Minister has declined to give the figures, will he bear in mind that the increase in Faganism, which is clearly reflected in his reply, suggests that the Government's economic policies have an influence on these matters among communities and families? Will he encourage his right hon. Friend in Cabinet to seek a change in those policies?

Mr. Hogg: Talking about economic policies, the one pick-pocket that this country needs to beware of is the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley).

Mr. Favell: Is it not about time that the Opposition stopped excusing crime and started condemning it?

Mr. Hogg: That advice is long overdue and I hope that right hon. and hon. Members opposite will heed it, although I doubt that they will.

Aurang Zeb (Air Fare)

16. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received requesting the payment from public funds of the return air fare from Pakistan to the United Kingdom of Aurang Zeb.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Representations have been received from the hon. Member and from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck). Representations have also been made by way of early-day motion 702.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister confirm that the Ombudsman condemned the way in which Mr. Zeb was removed from this country within 17 hours of his arrival as a denial of natural justice, and that his principal officer apologised to me and to his sponsor because we had been denied an opportunity to make representations on his behalf? Will the Minister confirm that he apologised for the way that Mr. Zeb had been treated? Will he now add some modest generosity to that apology by paying a return air flight for Mr. Zeb from Pakistan to this country so that he can have a short holiday with his friends and relatives, which he was denied last year?

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Zeb was refused entry—in my view rightly—as not being a genuine visitor. As he was not a genuine visitor and has not appealed against that decision, I do not think the British public would be delighted if we brought him back here for a free holiday. The complaint to the Parliamentary Commissioner was not about the refusal of entry, but about Mr. Zeb being removed without sufficient effort being made to contact his sponsor. The immigration service has apologised for that, and the Parliamentary Commisioner said in his report that he thought the apology was an appropriate outcome.

Mr. Speaker: Before we start Prime Minister's questions today, may I again remind the House that supplementary questions to the Prime Minister must relate to her responsibilities.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Prime Minister aware that if pensions were still linked to earnings increases, under Labour's formula a single pensioner would be £6 a week better off? If Britain's economy is as good as the Prime Minister pretends, why is it that a single pensioner will get only a measly 80p next week?

The Prime Minister: Had Labour been in power Britain would have gone broke long ago, and many of her contracts with pensioners with it. As it is, we have honoured our pledge to keep the pension more than in line with inflation. We have got inflation down. People's incomes from savings and pensions are greatly up, and people can look forward to a future with security.

Mr. Michael Marshall: After me right hon. Friend's forthright talks in Moscow, will she undertake to continue the same process with Tokyo?

The Prime Minister: We have embarked upon forthright discussions with Tokyo. Just before I came in I received a letter from Mr. Nakasone saying that the matter of Cable and Wireless was being considered, and, as my hon. Friend probably knows, we are laying today an order under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Kinnock: Has the Prime Minister's attention been drawn to the figures obtained from the Treasury last week, which show that the direct tax burden on families of half average, average and one and a half times average income has increased significantly, and in some cases savagely, under her Government? Is that what she meant eight years ago this month when she promised that under her Government

"taxes must and taxes will be cut"?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted that the Labour party is now so concerned about reducing income tax that it has reversed its previous policy and now supports us. Real take-home pay for a married man on average earnings—*[Interruption.]* Real net take-home earnings—which is what people are interested in—for a married man on average earnings have risen by 21 per cent. since 1978-79. They barely increased under Labour.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Lady is in some danger of misleading the country with those figures. In her comparisons with the Labour Government, is she aware that the rise in the burden under her Government has been twice as big as it was under the Labour Government? Is she aware that, far from her claims relating to people on average, below average, and above average income, the family on £114 a week is in real terms £5 a week worse off because of the direct tax take, and that the family on average earnings of £227 a week is £6-odd worse off because of total tax increase? Will she answer the real question? Is that what she meant when she said that she would cut taxes?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman forgets that average earnings have gone up enormously, and with them net take-home pay. [HON. MEMBERS: "Tax".] Yes, right, let us talk about tax. We removed the national insurance surcharge, which the Labour party shoved on

jobs. We took it off. Had we left that on, income tax could have been 3p lower than it is. We did not approve of a tax on jobs, so we took it off. The right hon. Gentleman quotes figures. If we had kept Labour's income tax and national insurance regime as it was, a married man on average earnings, with two children, would now be paying £4·85 a week more in income tax and national insurance contributions.

Q2. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. MacKay: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that one of the many benefits to accrue from her visit to Moscow is that she has brought back orders and letters of intent to the value of £400 million to British industry? Is that not good news for the country and for the jobless?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Soviet Prime Minister proposed, and I accepted, an annual target of aggregate trade between the Soviet Union and this country of £2·5 billion by 1990. That means putting up our present trade, but we are going in that direction, because while I was there contracts to the value of £400 million were signed, including a very good one with GEC—[HON. MEMBERS: "Letters of intent."] Letters of intent—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: There was a letter of intent, a memorandum of understanding, between GEC and Simon Carves for a very big sum for electronic equipment, and also a major one for John Brown, the construction firm, to construct a polypropylene plant, which will bring jobs very much where they are needed. It is very good news. I am so sorry that the Opposition, who are always complaining about unemployment, have not the guts to admit it.

Q3. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: On the subject of human rights, now that they are very much in vogue, and the question of sacked miners in Britain, in view of what British Coal has had to say today whereby 300 sacked miners are still not to be allowed to return to work, will the Prime Minister—as she professes to practise what she preaches—call on British Coal to see to it that those 300 miners are treated properly? Why is it, if they cannot get their jobs back, that miners should be treated differently from swindling Tory Members of Parliament?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that the case that he raises about miners is a matter for the National Coal Board. While the hon. Gentleman is talking about human rights, may I point out that many miners wanted freedom from intimidation when they insisted on going to work during the coal strike.

Mr. Burt: As we are 10 minutes into Question Time and it has not formally been done, may I offer the Prime Minister a very warm welcome back after her quite remarkable visit—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should ask a question.

Mr. Burt: While my right hon. Friend was away, dealing with the rather marginal issues of peace, security and human rights, she may not have noticed that the Opposition were dealing with the really nitty-gritty problem facing society and were litigating over nursery rhymes and party political broadcasts——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that is the Prime Minister's responsibility. I gave the hon. Gentleman an opportunity. I cannot keep on giving these warnings. The hon. Gentleman must keep his question in order.

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. John Cartwright.

Q4. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cartwright: Has the Prime Minister had time, since her return from Moscow, to see the report of the Royal College of Nursing, which suggests that a combination of high housing costs and low pay has resulted in as many as one in four nursing jobs being left unfilled in London hospitals? Does she share the view of the Royal College of Nursing that if something is not done urgently patients will be put at risk? What action will her Government take to tackle this problem?

The Prime Minister: Nurses' pay has increased by 23 per cent. over and above inflation since the Government came into office. The number of nurses and midwives has risen by 60,000 since 1979. I understand that there are reports on staff shortages in London. Expenditure on health services in London has risen by 10 per cent. in real terms since 1979, and the National Health Service management board has commissioned a report to look at any particular problems over the recruitment of nurses in London. A study team expects to report by late spring and the board will then consider what action may be required.

Mr. Forth: Following the establishment of a unique and valuable rapport between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the leader of the Soviet Union, will my right hon. Friend be bringing to our friends and allies in NATO and the West the benefit of that relationship which she has established, and can she therefore give us hope for a more secure future based on that relationship and the work that she has already done?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we are in touch with all our NATO colleagues about the results of my visit to Moscow. It is our intention to follow up all matters closely, because we believe that it is essential to create greater friendship, trust and confidence if we are to get the benefit of reductions in nuclear and other weapons.

Q5. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cox: Is the Prime Minister aware, when she talks about health services in London, of the hospital closures that have taken place during the eight years of her

Government, of the effect that that has had on local communities and that we are now facing in London something that is called "hot-bedding", which means that in-patients have to vacate their beds during the day so that day patients can make use of them? Is that not an indictment of the attitude of the hon. Lady and her Government towards health services, not only in London, but up and down the country?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, day surgery is on the increase and it is very welcome. Many people wish to get home as soon as they can after surgery and it means a far greater and better use of doctors' and nurses' time. As far as London is concerned — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: As I said a moment ago, expenditure on health services in London has risen — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a matter of great interest to many London Members, of whom I am one.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure on health services in London has risen by 10 per cent. in real terms, over and above inflation, since 1979.

The hon. Gentleman and I are both London Members and we are both aware of the policy of allocating greater increases in resources to other areas. It seems to me that that is a policy with which he heartily disagrees and that he would propose not to put as much into Scotland, the north-east, the north-west, the south-west and Wales as we are doing.

Q6. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Baker: In the light of the dire threat to many of our youth and employment training schemes, will my right hon. Friend reaffirm her Government's commitment to such schemes, because the dire threat, according to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), is that a Labour Government would not contemplate them?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I confirm that we shall continue the youth training scheme, which, as my hon. Friend knows, has been increased to two years and gives excellent training opportunities to young people, which will help them to get better jobs than they might otherwise have had. My hon. Friend will also be aware that we have just launched a new job training scheme which will be for six months and will soon be training about 250,000 young people a year, particularly for jobs where employers find it difficult to find people to fill vacancies. I understand from the Labour party that it would like a similar scheme. When we introduce such a scheme the Labour party calls it fiddling the figures. If it were to introduce such a scheme, it would call it proper training.

Soviet Union (Prime Minister's Visit)

3.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I should like to make a statement, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind both sides of the House that these are important matters.

The Prime Minister: I should like to make a statement, Mr. Speaker, about the visit which I paid to the Soviet Union from 28 March to 1 April, accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

I was able to carry out a very full and interesting programme arranged by the Soviet authorities, for whose hospitality and welcome I am very grateful.

The most important aspect of my visit was of course the very extensive talks which I had with General Secretary Gorbachev. These covered the following subjects: first, the prospects for agreements on reductions in nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons; second, the fundamental differences between our two political systems and their wider consequences; third, Mr. Gorbachev's programme of restructuring of Soviet society and the Soviet economy; fourth, international regional problems; and fifth, human rights.

In our talks on arms control we agreed that priority should be given to an agreement on intermediate range nuclear weapons, with strict verification, with constraints on shorter-range systems and with immediate follow-on negotiations to deal more fully with shorter-range systems.

We did not reach agreement on NATO's belief that the West should have a right to match Soviet shorter-range systems, or over the precise systems which should be covered in the follow-on negotations.

I should add that I made it clear to Mr. Gorbachev that the United Kingdom would not be prepared to accept the denuclearisation of Europe, which would leave us dangerously exposed to Soviet superiority in conventional and other forces.

We also agreed that priority should be given to negotiating a ban on all chemical weapons. The United Kingdom has made important proposals on this in Geneva and Mr. Gorbachev indicated that the Soviet Union could broadly accept our approach.

We agreed that there should be early negotiations on reductions in conventional forces, in which, as the House knows, the Soviet Union has a substantial preponderance. I expressed our support for a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic nuclear weapons. Mr. Gorbachev made clear the Soviet view that this matter was linked to agreement on SDI.

I made a number of proposals for achieving greater predictability in this field which Mr. Gorbachev will consider. Deployment of an advanced strategic defence system would of course be a matter for negotiations, as President Reagan and I agreed at Camp David in December 1984.

I do not underestimate the differences which remain between us on these matters. It was none the less clear from our talks that we agree that progress on arms control requires a step-by-step approach with clearly identified priorities, and that we are largely in agreement on what those priorities shall be. This is a useful and positive step, and I am hopeful that a satisfactory agreement can be reached on intermediate nuclear forces by the end of this year.

In our discussion of regional problems, I explained to Mr. Gorbachev the reasons for Western apprehensions about Soviet policies and intentions. I said—and the Foreign Secretary made the same point to Mr. Shevardnadze—that the United Kingdom could support the creation of a neutral, non-aligned Afghanistan, and had indeed presented proposals for it as long ago as 1980. However, this could not be achieved until the Soviet occupation was ended and elections were held.

On human rights problems, I welcomed the steps which had already been taken, while expressing the hope that more prisoners of conscience and dissidents would be released, and that Jews would be allowed to leave the country should they wish to do so. I emphasised that we were not interfering in the Soviet Union's internal affairs: the Soviet Government had accepted the commitments in the Helsinki Final Act on the freer movement of people and ideas, and we were asking that these be observed. Mr. Gorbachev said that the Soviet Government considered all humanitarian cases very carefully, and would continue to deal with them attentively, with positive results where possible.

I told Mr. Gorbachev of our welcome for his polices of openness, restructuring and democratisation. We wish him all success in his endeavours. They point the way to the greater trust and confidence that will be needed if we are to reach agreement on arms control and in other areas.

My talks with Prime Minister Ryzhkov concentrated on bilateral matters, particularly trade. We agreed to work together to achieve by 1990 a volume of £2·5 billion in our bilateral trade. During my visit, contracts and letters of intent were signed or initialled amounting to nearly £400 million. So we have made a good start towards the target which we have set ourselves.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary held extensive and very useful talks on a wide range of international regional problems with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Shevardnadze, including in particular the middle east and Iran-Iraq. They also signed three intergovernmental agreements and a memorandum of understanding: on space co-operation, providing for co-operation between our scientists in a wide range of space sciences; on information and culture. It will encourage contacts and exchanges, in particular giving an opportunity for schoolchildren to visit Soviet families in their homes. It also provides for free and normal reception of radio broadcasts. We welcome the end of jamming of BBC broadcasts.

The third agreement was on improvement and upgrading of the United Kingdom—Soviet Union hot-line; and the fourth was on sites for new embassies in Moscow and London. Copies of the texts have been placed in the Library of the House.

In addition to my talks, I visited the ancient monastery and church of Zagorsk, and took part in a service there as a visible demonstration of support for those who continue to maintain their tradition of faith and worship in the Soviet Union. I toured a new housing development on the outskirts of Moscow, and gave an interview to Soviet television in which I was able freely to set out Western policies and concerns and which was broadcast in full. And I paid a most enjoyable and interesting visit to the Soviet Republic of Georgia.

Wherever I went, I was struck by the spontaneous warmth and friendliness of my reception by the people of the Soviet Union. I believe that this augurs well for our future relations.

Outside my official programme I had meetings with a delegation from the Soviet Committee for the Defence of Peace; a group of writers, artists and intellectuals; Dr. Sakharov and Mrs. Bonner, with whom I had a most interesting exchange on arms control and developments within the Soviet Union; and a group of Jewish refuseniks. In the course of this I was able to present to Mr. Josif Begun the award from the All-Party Committee on Soviet Jewry.

My visit took place at a most interesting and crucial moment in the development of the Soviet Union. I firmly believe that it is in our interest to welcome and encourage the course on which Mr. Gorbachev has embarked. Our political systems will remain very different and we shall continue to hold widely divergent views on many international problems, but Mr. Gorbachev and I were able to discuss these differences frankly in a spirit of friendship. When I took my leave of him, Mr. Gorbachev expressed the Soviet Union's willingness for wider co-operation in every field with the United Kingdom. That was a positive end to a most constructive and valuable visit.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): First, I thank the Prime Minister for her statement and express pleasure at the way in which either chemistry or travel has succeeded in broadening her mind about the Soviet Union — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: On the business done with Mr. Gorbachev, was his broad acceptance of the British proposals on a chemical weapon ban treaty the same as the Soviet Union's acceptance on 3 November 1986? Secondly, is the welcome agreement on joint space research the same as the one that was signed and published on 2 October 1986? Thirdly, will the right hon. Lady confirm that most of the companies involved in cultural exchanges have already made their own arrangements without any Government interest? Is she proposing to increase the Government's commitment to provide financial help with the expenses of the exchange between the National Theatre and the Mayakovsky theatre from the present sum of £12,500, given that the cost of the enterprise is £500,000?

On trade, will the Prime Minister accept that the bilateral trade arrangements made in Moscow are welcome and necessary, especially as the trade balance with the USSR has moved from a surplus of 6 per cent. in 1979-80 to a deficit of 24 per cent. in 1985-86?

Will the Prime Minister tell us whether on anti-ballistic missiles systems she had American agreement on her proposals for research timetables within the narrow interpretation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty of 1972? On nuclear weapons—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister was heard in silence — it does not help for hon. Members on both sides of the House to point fingers — and the same courtesy should be extended to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Kinnock: President Reagan has said recently, and plainly, that he wants

"the elimination of all nuclear weapons because they are uncivilised and immoral."

Mr. Gorbachev expresses exactly the same view. In view of those strong statements, does the right hon. Lady still maintain her belief that a world without nuclear weapons would be less stable and more dangerous than one with them, despite the clearly different convictions of both our ally and her new friend?

On civil and human rights, is the Prime Minister aware that her statement that Mr. Gorbachev's agreement to give case by case consideration to human rights issues was, as she put it,

"much better than we would have ever got two years ago"

is in some danger of being misleading? The truth is that well over two years ago I and, I am sure, others received precisely those undertakings in precisely those words from Mr. Chernenko and Mr. Gorbachev, and many of them have been honoured. Can she now tell me — *[Interruption.]* We can see how concerned Conservative Members are about civil and human rights in the world. They are about as enthusiastic about them as they are about civil and human rights in South Africa.

Can the Prime Minister now tell me, first——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House not to make gestures across the Chamber.

Mr. Kinnock: Can the Prime Minister tell me what progress she now anticipates in restoring movement under the Helsinki accords, at least to the levels of the late 1970s — a cause that many of us have been pursuing for a long time? Secondly, when does she believe that the 25 or 50 cases involving the reunification of British and Russian members of families will be resolved in the interests of those families?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman asked first about the agreement on space proposals. The director-general of the British National Space Centre signed a protocol in Moscow last October on co-operation in civil space sciences. The present agreement builds upon that. It consolidates and formalises existing collaboration between United Kingdom universities—Birmingham and London—and the Soviet space research institute, and provides for co-operation in classical space sciences—for example, X-ray astronomy, high energy astro-physics, solar and terrestrial physics and life and material sciences. Those include, for example, the effects of weightlessness in space — I am not sure how long the right hon. Gentleman wants me to go on.

Mr. Kinnock: Read it all out.

The Prime Minister: The memorandum of culture, builds on, but is separate from, the existing biennial cultural agreement, which was renewed for 1987-89 in January. It has nine new features. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman seems to treat the matter with some levity.

The Departments on both sides worked extremely hard to get the agreements ready for signature, and to take them further than any agreements have ever been taken. That applies particularly to the agreements on cultural matters, which go into more detail than ever before. I am surprised that the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to give credit where it is due.

I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman welcomes the contracts and memorandum of understanding on trade that were signed. The companies concerned were out

[The Prime Minister]

there; they are in touch with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Treasury and the Export Credits Guarantee Department. Those companies worked hard to get the contracts—or memorandum of understanding—signed while they were there, and so did the Soviet side.

With regard to the ABM system, I had, of course, discussed the proposals that I have put forward with the United States Government, and they knew precisely what I was going to put forward.

The right hon. Gentleman spoke of the elimination of all nuclear weapons. That may be a distant dream, but I do not think that it is practical. One founds one's defence policies not on dreams, but on security. For the next 20 years at least the security of this country and of the West will be founded on the nuclear deterrent. That is accepted by the United States Government as well as by us, and I think that the right hon. Gentleman will find that they have abandoned any suggestion of a second 50 per cent. reduction of inter-continental ballistic missiles. In any case, they were thinking of replacing those with cruise missiles and other weapons. The Americans are not abandoning the nuclear deterrent—unlike the right hon. Gentleman, who would give up all our defence and security.

In regard to civil and human rights, the number of people who have been released from prison in the past two months has been much better. Two years ago, it would have been almost unthinkable that I should see Dr. Sakharov and Mrs. Bonner in the British embassy. That was remarkable, and that is precisely what I said. It was unthinkable that so many should be released. There has been an increasing number of prison releases in the past days. I should have hoped, too, that the right hon. Gentleman would have welcomed that.

I am well aware that soon after the Helsinki accords were signed many more Soviet Jews were allowed out of the Soviet Union. The figure went up to about 30,000 a year in the years immediately following. Unfortunately, it was sharply reduced to well below 1,100 a year. Of course, that is a matter that one raises with them, because the way in which they honour the Helsinki accords is an indicator of the way in which they would honour any other agreement, including those on arms control.

One continually put that point to them. One added to it that for years and years to come—probably always—the overwhelming majority of Jewish people in the Soviet Union will stay in the Soviet Union because it is their home, and that they should have far greater rights to freedom of worship than they have now. One also put to them that the Chief Rabbi would like to discuss these matters. *[Interruption.]* Yes, we shall go on. The refuseniks whom I saw said to us, "Please continue— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Many people, both inside and outside the House, are interested in this subject.

The Prime Minister: The refuseniks whom I saw thanked not one side but both sides of the House and the British people for the way in which we have constantly raised human rights causes. It is absurd that the right hon. Gentleman should try to make a party political point.

Mr. Francis Pym (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will my right hon. Friend accept that her visit to the Soviet Union and the way in which she carried it off is universally admired and approved and that, despite the grudging, indeed carping, criticisms of the Leader of the Opposition, the view of the House is that she has done our nation and the cause of peace a great service?

Can my right hon. Friend give any more information about the progress that she has made on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan? Whereas she did a great deal to improve relations between Britain and the Soviet Union, and indeed the West, it seems that until that withdrawal takes place there is bound to be an extraordinary strain between the West and the Soviet Union.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his opening comments. It was a significant visit at what could be a turning point in history.

My right hon. Firend the Foreign Secretary and I raised the problem of Afghanistan. It is quite clear that the Soviet Union would like to withdraw. It is also clear that it does not know quite how to go about it or what to do. We pointed out that the withdrawal of troops should be accompanied by free elections for people to determine their own future. This is one of those occasions on which there is a considerable difference between the two sides. We believe in a plural society, and they do not. Communism is a fundamental part of their constitution. They have no clear idea of the way in which they wish to go. We have made it clear that one of the touchstones by which we shall judge them and by which we shall judge more openness in their society is how soon they withdraw the occupation troops.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Prime Minister note that there will be a general and genuine welcome for what she did in Moscow and that the personal rapport that she achieved with Mr. Gorbachev, which will come as no surprise to observers of Mr. Gorbachev but will perhaps come as a surprise to some observers of her own previous style, will also be genuinely welcomed? Will not the real test of what was done with the time this week come at Geneva, and what signal is she now giving to the United State about how those talks should go?

When she lit a candle at Zagorsk, did she remember that there still remains in place the whole massive totalitarian system and that there are many people still praying, some of them in secret and in psychiatric hospitals? Will Mr. Gorbachev continue to be willing and able to continue the pace of change remarkably achieved so far?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman asks about the intermediate nuclear weapons negotiations at Geneva. Of course, we are also in touch with the United States to indicate the areas of agreement and the areas which, as I said in my statement, have yet to be thrashed out. That really concerns what the agreement will be on the shorter range missiles where we would like the right to have equal limits on warheads. That is not yet agreed with the Soviet Union. We believe that it would be the right way to go.

At the moment in the draft treaty before the two sides at Geneva, it is said that there should be constraints upon shorter range missiles and immediate follow-on negotiations. It is in refining precisely what those constraints will be that the difficulties will come. There are other problems still to be resolved, the first of which is verification. I made

it clear to them that we would have preferred global zero-zero on intermediate nuclear weapons, and the moment one says that each side can keep 100, even though they are well away from western European territory, one has extra problems of verification in saying that it is precisely 100 and no more that are kept. If they wanted to reduce the verification tasks they would go to global-global zero, which we would accept and so would the United States. Therefore, there is quite a bit to thrash out and verification has always presented some difficulties.

We pointed out that freedom of worship is absolutely fundamental to us in Britain and we expect that with increasing openness all people should have freedom of worship. The Foreign Secretary and I took with us a considerable list of people who are penalised and some who are in prison for their religious beliefs. That is not accepted in the Soviet Union, but those who have come out in recent months asked us particularly to raise the problems of those who are prisoners of conscience because they said that they do not get as much publicity as others and sometimes they may feel that they are forgotten. There is quite a long way to go, but the important thing is that with increasing openness a fresh start has been made. One can only welcome that very warmly.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): In view of the Prime Minister's outstanding success in the Soviet Union, may I propose to her that now is the time to ask the United States and our other NATO allies to broaden the methods by which we communicate one with the other in order that consultation about future discussions on arms negotiations shall be taken with each and every one of the NATO allies and not have just the United States representing one view at Geneva?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct. It is important to keep the consultations on a regular basis. We recently met those who are doing the negotiating as they have been around each and every NATO partner with their ideas to try to get the reaction across Europe. It is very important that we meet more frequently. As my hon. Friend is aware, we meet our European partners very often and ask our United States partners to come through London more frequently so that we may discuss these matters with them more often.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Will the right hon. Lady ensure that a very early opportunity is given to this House to have a full debate on the radical transformation which is in progress in both the foreign policy and the defence policy of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I understand that it is likely that there will shortly be a foreign affairs debate. We will very soon have the annual statement on defence which, of course, will be open to full debate. I do not think that there has been a major change in defence policy of the type that the right hon. Gentleman envisages. As he has heard, there has been a very vigorous exchange between the Soviet Union and ourselves as to precisely why we fully believe in the nuclear deterrent and deterrence at every level and that we simply will not stand for the denuclearisation of Europe.

Sir Frederic Bennett (Torbay): Referring back to an earlier question, may I re-emphasise to my right hon. Friend the importance of a settlement to the Afghan problem? Did she also find time, in what must have been a lengthy session, to raise the question of any relaxation between both sides on the continuing shoot-to-kill orders from east to west across the Berlin wall, which she has described as an abomination, recalling, too, that this is the 750th anniversary of the founding of Berlin, and that the wall represents a situation that is unacceptable to free people everywhere?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend has pointed out, the Berlin wall is the most visible sign of the way in which borders operate round a Communist society. It will be a long time, if indeed it ever happens, before people there enjoy the freedom which we enjoy. One must not be under any illusion that any country which has Communism in its basic constitution, and which does not have an independent judiciary in its basic constitution, is a different country from the one which we know. *[Interruption.]* There would not be free trade unions or the freedoms that we enjoy.

For the first time since the revolution 70 years ago, there is now an understanding that the Soviet system, as it exists at present, is not working. It must become a more open society with a more incentive-based economy and more distribution of responsibility. We should welcome that change of direction, and hope that increasing openness will lead to increasing discussion, and that that will lead to an increasing security with neighbours.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Prime Minister accept that, happily, there is an area of common ground in this House and that her welcome representations about human rights in general, and the Jewish refuseniks in particular, are in the appreciated and respected tradition of her predecessors, especially Lord Wilson of Rievaulx? However, did she receive any assurance that Josif Begun, Ida Nudel and Vladimir Slepak, who have been allowed out of prison and exile, have any real hope of also being allowed out of the Soviet Union? When she saw Mr. Begun and, happily, was able to present to him the award of the all-party committee, did she afterwards have the opportunity to protest to the Soviet authorities about the exclusion from the original ceremony of hon. Members from both sides of this House and their spouses?

The Prime Minister: On the latter point, no, I did not. On the other point raised by the hon. and learned Gentleman, I was unable to see Mrs. Nudel. I wanted to see her because I met her sister in Jerusalem, and we have all been active in pursuing her case. At the moment, she is in Odessa, a long way away, and did not get our communication in time to make the journey to Moscow. I think that she would have done so if she could. We received a telephone call from her about her disappointment.

Mr. and Mrs. Begun stressed "There is a great deal to be done. Will the West please continue to make representations?" Without that, they do not think that the changes which have come about, which are a comparatively small but welcome start, would have taken place. In many ways, they think that the morale of the refuseniks is kept up because they know that other people speak up, and will continue to speak up, on their behalf. If we continue to do that, and if there is greater openness, I think and hope that the Soviet Union will realise that it

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is judged on its performance in such matters. That is why Mr. Gorbachev said that he will consider individual cases and he hopes that that will have a positive result.

I should report to the hon. and learned Gentleman, and to other hon. Members, that the refuseniks are concerned that the Soviet authorities appear to have a tendency to say that it is those who have families outside, and where there is cause for the re-unification of families, who will have priority. There is a feeling that that might be to the exclusion of others who wish to leave who do not have a split family outside. That is giving rise to some concern.

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those Conservative Members who have had meetings with the Kremlin and with General Secretary Gorbachev welcome the fact that a British Prime Minister has a dialogue with the General Secretary?

My right hon. Friend mentioned Europe. Is not one of our difficulties in this country the fact that in two weeks' time Prime Minister Chirac will pay a similar visit? Will my right hon. Friend turn her mind to the future and consider the way in which we in Europe can ensure that there is adequate verification from a European point of view, admittedly within NATO? What progress has she made in that direction?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. Prime Minister Chirac will be coming over for a long meeting in a couple of weeks. My hon. Friend will recall that just before I went to the Soviet Union I went to see President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl to discuss our European approach, especially the stance that we would take on intermediate nuclear weapons and short range weapons. We are all absolutely adamant that there should be no question of the denuclearisation of Europe or the decoupling of Europe from the United States. We intend to have further contacts to see precisely how we should tackle that problem, especially as it will be an issue on the negotiating table in Geneva.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): As the Prime Minister has now begun to realise that the people of the Soviet Union have the same hopes and aspirations as we have, and that they have no aggressive intent against this country, will she take a much more positive attitude and go to the bargaining table with some concessions that she will make instead of placing every sort of obstacle in the path of disarmament, as she has done in the past?

The Prime Minister: No, I shall never put our defence or security in jeopardy as the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends have done in their approach to unilateral nuclear disarmament. I made that perfectly clear. It is because I make that perfectly clear that I am invited to the Soviet Union and to other countries. They know that I shall not say anything different there on this matter from what I say anywhere else, whether talking to Mr. Gorbachev or on Soviet television. Before I went there, many people did not seem to know that it was the Soviet Union which stationed the SS20s and refused to take them down, and that it was only after it refused to do so for four years that we stationed cruise and Pershing. It is only now that it is proposed to take out both. The firmness and determination effectively to defend the security of this country is vital, and will always continue to be so.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the strong line that she took over Afghanistan. Did she or my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary raise the problems of Angola, Ethiopia, and Aden in talks with the Soviet leader?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I spoke about Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique and the many places in which the Soviet Union seems to have effective determination of some policies, and the way in which it provides arms and not food. It is left to the West to give aid in the form of food. As my right hon. Friend is aware, we have friendly relationships with Mozambique and have helped that country for a considerable time when it has been short of food. We raised with Mr. Gorbachev the external policy of the Soviet Union because we are interested not only in its ideas on internal policy, but on the effect of that on its external policy in places such as those which my right hon. Friend mentioned.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): How does the Prime Minister reconcile her statement today and that which she made in Moscow, insisting on her rejection of a denuclearisation of Europe and her rejection of the reduction of nuclear weapons in other areas also, with the non-proliferation treaty, of which we are signatories, which has as its preamble a commitment to the abolition of nuclear weapons? Does she not yet understand, and did she not give Mr. Gorbachev the chance to explain, that if she and we insist on the maintenance of nuclear weapons, several other countries will do the same? Therefore, her policy will mean the widespread proliferation of nuclear weapons and the destruction of the universe by that means.

Cannot the right hon. Lady begin to learn from those who are trying to teach her, including Mr. Gorbachev? I congratulate her on the way in which she has assisted Mr. Gorbachev's re-election. We are all in favour of him getting back, if not of her.

The Prime Minister: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that we, the United States and NATO have agreed to a 50 per cent. reduction in intercontinental ballistic missiles in the Soviet Union and the United States, but that Mr. Gorbachev has not. He links that to SDI. There could be a massive reduction in strategic nuclear weapons if he were to agree.

Secondly, we would prefer the zero-zero option on intermediate range weapons. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that the Soviet Union created and stationed intermediate range weapons. If it had not done that, the problem need never have arisen. We want the right to equal numbers of shorter range weapons, and when people attempt to stop us from having that we have good grounds for suspecting their reasons.

Conventional weapons have never been enough to stop war, as the second world war showed. Even when the Soviet Union was more heavily supplied with conventional weapons than Germany, it did not prevent Hitler from attacking it. The right hon. Gentleman knows full well that in the last war the race was to get nuclear weapons first. Had it been Hitler, we would not be sitting here now. Conventional weapons have not been sufficient to stop

conventional war, whereas nuclear weapons have stopped both conventional and nuclear war. We want and intend to achieve peace and security, and that means having a nuclear deterrent.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): My right hon. Friend will be pleased at the gratitude of the oppressed Afghan people for what she said in Moscow. Did she discuss the conversations of the past four months held between Pakistani representatives and the Government of the Soviet Union in Moscow? In particular, did Mr. Gorbachev say anything about possible Soviet flexibility on a reduction from 18 months for the transfer and evacuation periods for Soviet troops?

The Prime Minister: No, I did not discuss those particular matters. I was anxious to stress the need for the Soviet forces of occupation in Afghanistan to be withdrawn and for free elections to be held. I made those main objectives absolutely clear, but the other matters did not arise.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Does the Prime Minister not now realise that working with one of the most able and genuine leaders in the world is much more rewarding in trying to cope with the world's problems than whatever contacts she may care to maintain with the limited puppet in the White House? Does she not now wish that she had made this visit somewhat earlier in her 12 years of leadership of the Conservative party so that there might have been fewer doubts about its purpose?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is in his usual unconstructive form. One of the valuable results from the visit was to get across our record on nuclear weapons and that of the Soviet Union to people who had never previously heard that the Soviet Union invented and stationed intermediate range weapons first and that the United Kingdom destroyed its chemical weapons in 1959 and the United States has not modernised its while the Soviet Union has increased and modernised hers. That had not been heard in the Soviet Union before. It is only since Mr. Gorbachev came to power that I would have been allowed to have an interview on Soviet television with three interviewers which went out in full. I was interested to hear that people questioned about the interview said, "We begin to understand now for the first time why the West fears the Soviet Union." We had to put the record straight, and we did so effectively.

Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas (Chelmsford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that people throughout the country are grateful to her for her forthright championship of the rights of conscience in the Soviet Union? Will she use her influence in that direction on behalf of the brave young people of the jazz section of the musicians' union in Czechoslovakia who are suffering in prison today because of their principles?

The Prime Minister: Yes, we must proceed with all human rights cases on the basis of the Helsinki accords. That gives us a standing to pursue all these cases. My right hon. Friend raises another interesting point to do with the increasing openness and incentive economy in the Soviet Union, namely, whether there is to be the same move in the satellite countries and what effect that would have.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Prime Minister aware that the House is interested in the warmth of her reaction to Mr. Gorbachev? She reacted warmly to him when she first met him in Britain, but then went cool and resumed her old cold war posture. May we take it that she will not go cool this time, at least not until after the general election?

The Prime Minister: Mr. Gorbachev came in 1984 at the invitation of the British Government — [HON. MEMBERS: "The IPU."]—rather, the IPU, and I had five hours of talks with him at Chequers. That was long before he held his present position, and it established the basis of a relationship which has enabled us to talk openly further. The right hon. Gentleman has perhaps not yet fully realised the enormity of the change that Mr. Gorbachev is trying to bring about in Soviet politics. That movement to greater openness and an incentive economy is making it an important time both to have closer contacts and to achieve from the Soviet Union's higher regard for the Helsinki accords and from more visits much closer trust and confidence which are necessary for further arms control agreements.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): Bearing in mind the distinct possibility of the Soviet Union re-establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, has my right hon. Friend anything to say as a result of her prolonged talks about the possibility of the Soviet Union participating in the middle east peace process?

The Prime Minister: We spoke briefly about that, but I do not think there is anything further to report to the House. My hon. Friend is aware of the proposal that there should be an international conference, not directly involved in the negotiations, but as a framework for direct negotiations between Israel and King Hussein with an appropriate group of Palestinians. The United States has now accepted the principle of an international conference, but a great deal more work needs to be done on precisely how it should operate and whom it should consist of. We shall try to achieve further steps in that direction.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): As one who has for many years been critical of the internal regime in the Soviet Union and the lack of human rights of the Soviet people, will the Prime Minister take it from me that we greatly welcome the open and frank discussions that took place between her and Mr. Gorbachev in the Soviet Union? Is it not clear that those open discussions could not have taken place and that she could not have gone on Soviet television and said what she did if Mr. Gorbachev and Soviet leaders had not opened the way for that? Therefore, is it not clear that if we are not to help the old Stalinist forces to regain control and turn back the wheels of history, we need to help that progress further, particularly by giving greater support to the proposals of Mr. Gorbachev and others to get rid of nuclear weapons throughout Europe?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Member for his remarks. I believe that, in a way, he is saying the same as I am with regard to the internal policies of the Soviet Union. Though those policies are still based on Communism in the Soviet constitution, there is now, as a matter of policy, since Mr. Gorbachev's speech of 27 January, a greater openness and discussion. There is a rather different economic system, not:

"From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs"

[The Prime Minister]

but, "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work". There is also a much greater degree of dispersing responsibilities.

It is that beginning of a different policy—we do not know yet how it will work — that offers new opportunities. I think that the hon. Gentleman is right about that. It is absolutely in our interests, as well as the interests of the people of the Soviet Union, that we should encourage those things, because greater freedom is obviously good for all mankind. I believe that it will lead to greater prosperity and to greater understanding. However, I must make it clear that changes are brought about not by speeches or intentions, but by practical results. We shall do everything we can to look for and encourage practical results, but no one in a responsible Government position would ever put at risk our security and defence. One mistake could be absolutely fatal.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I applaud not only the achievements, but the stamina of my right hon. Friend. Is she aware that millions of Christians, Jews and Moslems are glad that she and her right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary testified to the principle of religious freedom? As my right hon. Friend moved about, did she sense the profound, continuing religious feeling among many Russians that often puts many in the West to shame?

The Prime Minister: The services at Zagorsk were remarkable, and the number of people who came out from those great cathedrals equally remarkable. The church in which services are held at this time of the year was absolutely full, not only with older people, but with families coming to worship together. The people to whom I spoke outside also said that they liked the church that they went to. In that area, they certainly can go to that particular church freely. I regret to say that that freedom does not extend throughout the Soviet Union. We simply must keep up the need to stand up for those people and persist in pursuing their cases.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In the light of her experience and the changes that she has identified, will the Prime Minister use her influence with those who take entrenched positions on both sides of the Atlantic, and who feel that a richer, more efficient Soviet Union means a menacing Russia, to show that they are mistaken and that they should respond in a more up-to-date way?

The Prime Minister: I have said how we have responded. It is a turning point in the Soviet Union and we hope that the intentions will come to fruition. I believe that it would be in the interests not only of the Soviet Union and its people if those intentions came to fruition, but also of the West. A much more open society, more freedom of discussion and movement would be in the interests of Europe and of the rest of the world.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): As one who also sought to raise the question of human rights with General Secretary Gorbachev last year, may I say to my right hon. Friend how much I admired the way she did so this time, emphasising the importance that we attach to this question without at the same time making it an absolute barrier to achieving a first step towards reducing the nuclear balance between East and West?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend has said, and as right hon. and hon. Members are aware, it is a difficult balance to achieve, because the Soviets are extremely sensitive if one tries to interfere in their internal affairs, even though we point out that we have a totally independent judiciary, a rule of law, and a plural society quite different from theirs. What gives us a standing is the Helsinki accords, when the Soviets agreed to a freer movement of ideas and people. We must never forget that, and we must pursue that point. I have the impression that the Soviets are very much aware of the accords' importance in the context of not only better relations in trading and other matters, but of achieving more reductions in weapons of all kinds.

If over a period of years one achieves better confidence and trust, one can travel in the Soviet Union freely and one can see what is going on freely, those represent the essential conditions when one does not need to have as many weapons, provided they are always balanced. One must never be weak, because it is weakness that attracts wars and not strength.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I must have regard to the fact that there is another statement, and then the business statement. I will allow questions to continue for another five minutes and then we must move on.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the Prime Minister accept that one of the reasons for having discussions between the leaders of nation states is that we would hope to make the world a safer place? Are we correct in understanding that the right hon. Lady had up to 13 hours of discussions with General Secretary Gorbachev? Are we correct in assuming that neither of those individuals made any meaningful concessions in relation to strategic, INF or battlefield arms reductions? How can we assume that the world is a safer place after those discussions?

The Prime Minister: I note that the hon. Gentleman is trying to play the whole thing down. I believe that it was a very constructive visit. We discussed at great length, more thoroughly than I have done with any other leader, the differences in beliefs, the consequences that flow from that, the problems that Mr. Gorbachev is likely to face when making changes in the Soviet Union, and arms control.

We were able to learn at first hand from Mr. Gorbachev about his plans for restructuring and for a more open society. That is important. We agreed that we think that it is in our interests that, as Mr. Sakharov said, "An open society is safer for its neighbours".

Secondly, I gave Mr. Gorbachev our view on a wide number of international issues. I hoped that the original doctrine of Communism — world domination by the Communist system — would be dropped, because I thought it caused great concern and fear in the West.

I also believe that the way in which the people came out to talk to me and the fact that I was able to talk more freely than any other leader on television helps to make the world a more secure place. — *[Interruption.]* It is through friendship and understanding that we will be able to verify a number of matters on arms control and human rights issues, and secure bilateral agreements. I believe that that does help to make the world a safer place.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her successful visit. With regard to the philosophical portions of her conversations with Mr. Gorbachev, I wonder whether she can tell us something about how she sees the similarities between her economic reforms in Britain and Mr. Gorbachev's proposals for Russia, and what about the similarities in the opposition to them in both countries?

The Prime Minister: I am well aware of the point that my hon. Friend is making. It took quite a time to turn Britain round from Socialism to a country with a high standard of living, respect in the world, strong defence and so on. Therefore, it will take much longer to turn round the Soviet system.

One is very much aware that, when one is embarking on change, there are many people who oppose it and one needs the help of those who believe in it. From time to time, I drew just a hint of a parallel in that respect.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): In view of the Prime Minister's remarks, did the General Secretary, in his discussions with her, confirm the view expressed by Gennady Genasimov—and I quote——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must paraphrase.

Mr. Howarth: The view was that the Prime Minister's trip was a campaign of self-advertisment on the eve of the British general election.

The Prime Minister: If that is all that the hon. Gentleman has to ask, it is not worth the time.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Will my right hon. Friend expand on her talks with Mr. Sakharov on the important issue of human rights? Is she aware that last Sunday the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) made a vicious personal attach on her on British television in which he stated that Mr. Sakharov had declined to meet her? Has the right hon. Gentleman got it wrong yet again?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) often gets it wrong. Mr. Sakharov did not decline to meet us. He was with Mrs. Bonner, whom we also saw in London. He is very grateful for the activities in this country on his behalf over the years and once again he welcomed very much the new open society. I had read the speeches that he made at the open forum. There is a great deal more to be done, and he asked if we would please continue to speak up on behalf of those who are not yet free to speak for themselves.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has intimated there might be a further opportunity to debate this matter. Perhaps we shall hear something about it this afternoon. I shall bear in mind on that occasion those hon. Members who have not been called.

Royal Ordnance plc

4.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about Royal Ordnance plc.

On 24 July 1986, I told the House of our plan to carry forward the Government's policy of moving Royal Ordnance plc to the private sector. In accordance with these plans we have talked to a number of companies who expressed an interest in acquiring the whole share capital of Royal Ordnance. On 16 March 1987 we were able to announce that firm bids had been received from two companies—British Aerospace and GKN.

The bids received have been carefully scrutinised, compared and assessed with the help of our professional advisers. We have had further discussions with both bidders on points arising from their offers, culminating in a final round of discussions at ministerial level with the chairmen of both companies. For obvious reasons these have been sensitive and delicate negotiations but we have tried to come to our decision with a minimum of delay to avoid prolonging the uncertainty that has inevitably hung over Royal Ordnance during this period. I am pleased to tell the House that I have decided to accept British Aerospace's offer and I have now signed a sale and purchase agreement with that company for a price of £190 million.

The sale is conditional only on there being no reference of the sale to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The Office of Fair Trading is already giving consideration to the question and we expect its recommendation to be available next week. Subject to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's decision in the light of this recommendation I would expect the sale to be completed before the Easter recess. I should like to take this opportunity of thanking GKN, as well as British Aerospace, for the excellent proposals which they made to us, for the obvious hard work that went into producing them and for their co-operation and helpfulness in all the discussions leading to our final decision.

I should emphasise that the sale is a sale of shares. This means that ownership of Royal Ordnance is transferring to British Aerospace but the company remains a separate legal entity. It follows that the terms and conditions of service of employees of Royal Ordnance plc will not be affected by the sale.

In accordance with our general aim of widening share ownership we intend to make available to employees of Royal Ordnance plc free British Aerospace shares paid for by the Government to a similar value to that which was planned last summer at the time of the proposed flotation. Details will be worked out over the next few days.

I believe that this announcement is very good news for Royal Ordnance. It marks the end of a period of uncertainty about ownership of the company but, equally important, it opens up the full range of opportunities for development and growth of business which are only really available in the private sector. The company has made most significant and welcome progress since its formation some two years ago, but as a trading organisation Royal Ordnance needs this new freedom to fulfil its potential.

British Aerospace is a substantial and highly successful British company with a fine track record on exports which, as we have often said, are vital to the future of Royal

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Ordnance. I am confident that with its backing Royal Ordnance will thrive and secure the best possible future for its work force.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The right hon. Gentleman claims some credit for ending the uncertainty, but the operation which started with his predecessor and continued under him created the uncertainty for the Royal Ordnance factories. They were trading efficiently and commercially before his Government started to tamper with them. When the tampering started, according to independent valuers in the City, the value of Royal Ordnance factories was said to be between £350 million and £400 million. The valuation today is £190 million, which is substantially lower than the net asset value. That is the measure of damage by the Government to Royal Ordnance factories over the last two or three years.

What will happen if the Monopolies and Mergers Commission looks into the matter and decides that British Aerospace would be the largest defence contractor—even larger than GEC—if the sale went ahead? If the sale is vetoed will the Government continue to operate Royal Ordnance as a public limited company within the Government, or do they have other plans?

Can the Secretary of State confirm that the British Aerospace bid envisages at least 3,500 redundancies in the next few months? Will he comment on rumours in the industry that two factories — one possibly in the midlands and the other possibly in the south of England —will have to close as a consequence of the deal?

The statement mentioned pay and conditions. Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that pension rights will remain as they are within the plc? Considerable discussion went on in Committee about there being no detriment in respect of pension rights. Will the pension rights be safeguarded or will they be subsumed into British Aerospace pension schemes?

What will be the cost to the Government of providing free shares to employees at Royal Ordnance factories?

Mr. Younger: The right hon. Gentleman is not correct in his opening remarks about uncertainty. It is well known by all those who are interested and within Royal Ordnance itself that for many years, despite the hard work by all those who work in it, its organisation has not given it the best chance to maximise its returns and the business that it could get for its factories. There is no doubt that its status before it was made a plc restricted business most unfairly, and most unfortunately, for the work force.

The Office of Fair Trading is considering the matter and will make its recommendations to my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. It will then be entirely up to him to decide what action he proposes to take in the light of that recommendation. The sale of shares is dependent upon the recommendation not to refer the sale to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. If that recommendation is made a new situation will arise and will have to be dealt with. Our view is that the deal should be able to go ahead, but that is entirely up to my right hon. Friend to decide.

There is no truth in the rumours that, as a consequence of the sale, two factories will close or that there will be any particular number of redundancies. Any future redundancies or closures, or, indeed, any expansions, will be entirely a matter for the new owners of the company to decide. They of course, intend to look at this new business that they have bought and make the best of it.

With regard to pension rights, as I said in my statement, conditions for employees will be exactly the same in the future as they have been in the past. The sale of the shareholding will not affect the operation of the Royal Ordnance pension funds and the Government are satisfied that the Crown Service fund is comparable to the principal Civil Service pension scheme and provides a secure basis for the payment of fully index linked pensions.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked a question about the cost of the free shares, which we have arranged as part of this deal. It was done because the employees could have felt that they have been hardly treated, since the original scheme for the flotation of Royal Ordnance involved free shares. The cost ought to be about £1 million and that, of course, will be provided by the Government.

As I made clear, I have no doubt whatsoever that this change to ownership by a highly respected and very successful British company in the defence industry will be very much in the interests of the future of those employed in Royal Ordnance.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I congratulate my right hon. Friend very warmly on this most successful sale on behalf of the Government. Will he accept from me that it is thanks to his good offices and those of his colleagues that we were able recently to negotiate a lease of the Powfoot factory in my constituency to ICI by Royal Ordnance? Will British Aerospace now take on this arrangement and, if necessary, and if both parties agree, be able to negotiate the sale in due course?

Mr. Younger: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for all that he has said. He is perhaps unduly modest in not pointing out that he had a great deal to do with encouragement of the three-year agreement for Powfoot, which I warmly welcome. There is no reason to assume that the new owners would wish to change this arrangement. In any case they will look at all parts of the business, including Powfoot, with the objective of making it run as successfully as possible and giving it as secure a future as possible.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that a number of my constituents are very worried about precisely the announcement that he has just made and that, far from allaying their anxiety, he has increased it? Can he state specifically that the redundancies mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will not take place? Can he give that assurance to the House?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure that the right hon. Gentleman has fully taken my statement on board. I made no reference to redundancies except in response to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). The future position is exactly the same for this company as for any other company. No one can give a guarantee that any company, with its future work load ahead of it, will never have any redundancies. Nor can anyone give a guarantee that any company will necessarily expand in the future. It is all dependent upon the management of the company and the performance of its work force. I have no doubt that prospects are much better after this change than they were before it.

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that today's announcement will be of considerable interest to my constituents and to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), who has taken a very close interest in the future of the small arms factory at Enfield? Can he confirm that the success of British Aerospace in the private sector and today's announcement about share distribution will provide considerable reassurance to the work force, as it should? He will not be surprised to know, perhaps, that the work force of the small arms factory will look for early reassurance that production will continue at Enfield.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and indeed both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) have repeatedly made representations to me on these points. There will be no change as a result of this agreement in the position regarding agreements on orders affecting the factories concerned. A feature of the agreement is an undertaking to enter into discussions on a long-term contract for the supply of explosives, propellants and ammunition. If no satisfactory arrangements can be reached, the arrangement on explosives and propellants will continue on a slightly extended and improved basis.

With regard to the second tranche of the SA80, the existing commitment to Royal Ordnance stands. The contract is still available if British Aerospace confirms the Royal Ordnance tender within two months of the sale. I think that my hon. Friends will find that the reassurance which they seek.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Does the right hon. Gentleman have any contractual agreement with British Aerospace to maintain the terms and conditions of employees in the future? Will he admit that the prosperity of the Royal Ordnance factories lies much more in his future intentions regarding the conventional arms ordering programme than in the management of British Aerospace?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is half right and half wrong. The handover of ownership of the shares goes towards preserving the terms and conditions and pension rights of the employees who are now employed by Royal Ordnance plc. They go into the new company with their conditions unchanged. They are thereafter in the position of anyone else who works for any company; it is between them and the company as to what their conditions may be for the future. Their position is no worse and no better than that of anyone else in British industry.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct in what he says about the ordering programme. The future of any industry in the defence sector is dependent on having a Government who are sound and strong on their defence policy. There is no doubt that history has proved many times over that the reductions and cuts and the general running down of defence industries under every Labour Government would be even worse under the next Labour Government should there ever be one.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that although many of my constituents at Radway Green are opposed to privatisation, all will welcome the announcement today, which will end the uncertainty of the last few years? Many other constituents will welcome the opportunities of the future, especially the chance to have a real stake in that future, given the share option. Moreover, they will consider that the agreement with British Aerospace was the better one in this arranged marriage, bringing as it will a dowry of increased sales and export opportunities.

Mr. Younger: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend and I am certain that she is absolutely right in all that she has said, and particularly in reminding us that, while most of the employees of Royal Ordnance will no doubt welcome the end of the uncertainty, there are some who will just feel that the change is one that they would never have wished to see. I am quite certain, however, that they will find that this change is to their advantage. They would do well to bear in mind that, had Royal Ordnance been left as it was some years ago without any change, the prospects would have been very much worse than they are.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Does the Secretary of State not accept that the uncertainty has been damaging, particularly when highly skilled ROF employees have sought greater security elsewhere? What assurances has he had from British Aerospace about the level of capital investment for the future of the ROFs? Finally, can he assure the House that the very wide-ranging defence procurement capability that will flow from this deal will in no way impair his search for the widest possible area of competition in supplying defence contracts?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman said, but I do not agree with him about uncertainty. There is one sure way of avoiding uncertainty, and that is to do nothing because then uncertainty is replaced by the certainty of a slow and inevitable decline. I do not think that anyone would want that. I agree with him that we must make sure that competition is still a major feature, and, of course, that is a feature that will be borne in mind by the Office of Fair Trading as it considers this proposal. I have no doubt that British Aerospace has every intention of running these factories in the future efficiently and well. Naturally, like other companies, it gives no guarantees of any particular level of investment, but it will be looking to run this business successfully, and anyone who has watched the progress of British Aerospace in recent years will know that it is a very well managed company indeed.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): As the hon. Member with the largest British Aerospace connection and with part of one of the Royal Ordnance factories at Chorley in my constituency, may I express to my right hon. Friend my satisfaction at this agreement and also that, I know, of my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), who is unable to comment because of his position in the Department? Could I particularly thank him for the fact that the delay is now over and that the potential of Royal Ordnance is to be joined to the worldwide success of British Aerospace? I also particularly welcome the employees' share ownership that is going to result from this deal. Does he agree with me that employees of Royal Ordnance, the length and breadth of the country, have very little to fear about their future if they go on making the right products at the right price and selling them worldwide, because therein lies a very good future?

Mr. Younger My hon. Friend is so right with his last point. It is overwhelmingly clear that if all members of the work force in Royal Ordnance can now look to a future

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that is at least charted out with a new owner, they will be able to make a contribution which itself will go a long way towards ensuring that their jobs are secure, and one hopes that the business will be developed.

My hon. Friend's other point is also important. There are many workers who, if they were asked to consider what sort of company they wanted to work for if not their current one, would opt for a company like British Aerospace because its story over recent years has been one of great success. I hope that Royal Ordnance will add to that success.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Minister explain to those of my constituents who work at Radway Green what compensation they will get from the free share offer from the Government, particularly in the light of the fact that at Shifnal the pattern has now been established that people apply for their own jobs and, although they are quoted a gross wage higher than their present one, their net wages will drop by as much as £10 a week? Would he like to reassure them that this is an advance in their standard of living and security for the future?

Mr. Younger: I am not at all sure what the hon. Lady regards as needing to be compensated for. If compensation has to be paid to workers whose company has been transferred to another, very successful, company which is likely to do better for them in the future, I should have thought that it would be what one might describe as "negative" compensation, since the transfer will clearly be of advantage to them.

As for the hon. Lady's detailed point of earnings, if she will raise it with me I will look into it.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): My right hon. Friend's statement will bring to an end the uncertainty that must have clouded the ROF generally in the past few months and Nottingham in particular. I welcome the single legal entity that he has described today and confirmation as to terms and conditions of employment. Can my right hon. Friend say a little more about shares, and clarify whether they will be British Aerospace shares or subsidiary shares in an ROF plc? As the Nottingham factory has a unique national facility, is he hopeful and can he say something encouraging about its future employment prospects?

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he is right in his general welcome of this and about the end of the recent uncertainty. On shares, I give him the assurance that he seeks: these shares, which will be available for employees and paid for by the Government, will be fully equal British Aerospace shares, so they will be shares already quoted on the stock exchange and thoroughly marketable in every sense. Thus they will be shares that have a real value, shares that the employees can feel are theirs and are a stake in their business in which they work.

As regards assurances for the future, no company can get an absolute guarantee that everything that it wishes will happen, but I cannot avoid repeating to the House that I am sure that, of all the alternative options facing this company's work force and management, getting it into the private sector and giving it the opportunity to enter the real commercial world and bid for new business is by far the best.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Is the Secretary of State aware of the very great damage done to employment in the Royal Ordnance factories as a result of misguided defence policy which has weakened our conventional forces? Is he also aware that under Labour, employment in the ordnance factories went up by 4,000 and that under the Conservatives it has fallen by 7,000, including 1,000 jobs lost in my constituency and many hundreds of jobs in the adjoining factory at Chorley? Is he, however, aware that there will be relief that British Aerospace rather than GKN has gained control, because it has a good reputation in Lancashire and those of us who come from that area, however much we opposed this denationalisation, will do our best to make sure that this arrangement works in the interests of our constituents and the employees?

What discussions have there been with British Aerospace about so-called rationalisation? There have been many press reports about this. What has British Aerospace said about that and what does it mean for jobs in the Blackburn and Chorley factories?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate and respect the hon. Gentleman's quite proper concern for those he represents and who work in Royal Ordnance factories. He knows that I cannot give him a guarantee for the future and, of course, British Aerospace has not yet had a chance, apart from assessing the value of the bid that it wished to make, to work out precisely how it intends to manage the company. It has made it clear in discussions with us—we would certainly not have agreed to the sale if it had been otherwise—that its intention would be to buy the shares in this business and run it as a whole. With its record, there is no way that they would run it other than to have it as a highly successful part of British Aerospace, a highly successful company fully owned through its shares by British Aerospace. So to answer the hon. Gentleman's question one must look at the track record of British Aerospace, see that it is paying £190 million for these assets and assume that the company has every reason to develop the business and run it properly.

I do here part company a little with the hon. Gentleman. I must congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on being wise enough not to make the hon. Gentleman defence spokesman because his defence policy seems to be even stranger than that of his party. He started by asserting that the Government's expenditure on defence and defence equipment has been lower than that of its predecessors, when the exact opposite is the case: the defence budget is running at about 28 per cent. higher than in 1979. In addition, the hon. Gentleman's defence policy actually has a different basis and this is why he comes to these conclusions. His idea is not to have a proper defence policy but to try to employ as many people as possible in defence factories. That may be a very good policy for employment in the short term, but it is not a good policy for defence. The hon. Gentleman ought to know that a more efficient defence industry is an essential part of an effective defence policy. He must also know that the party that he supports has always reduced defence spending and is proposing once more to destroy the whole basis on which the defence of this country has been carried out since the war.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I would like to add my congratulations to my right hon. Friend on the successful transaction with British Aerospace and tell him that my factory, ROF Bishopton, will rise to the new challenge in the new company. May I suggest that in the future, when it comes to reviewing procurement policy, he always considers British interests first and puts the interests of British companies first?

Mr. Younger: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Her representations on many occasions to me about those who work at the Bishopton factory have borne fruit in that today's announcement will give her constituents a more secure future than they have had for some time.

We try to buy British as often as we can, and the vast majority of defence equipment is bought in Britain.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): While I welcome the end of doubt and delay in this matter, is my right hon. Friend aware that the decision will be greeted with doubt and nervousness by the work force at Nottingham, primarily because theirs is one of the factories that is rumoured to be closed? When in reply to the Opposition spokesman my right hon. Friend said that there was no truth in the rumours that there would be closures, was this based on a pledge from British Aerospace?

Mr. Younger: As I said to the House earlier and as I say again to my hon. Friend, no company under any ownership—including this company—can guarantee that there will be no reduction in employment and no factories closed. That is not the real world, and my hon. Friend knows this as well as I do. There are no rumours of closure that have any basis in discussions or decisions taken with British Aerospace. That is the basis of what I have said, which is that rumours of closure are just that. It is now up to the new owners of Royal Ordnance to see how they can best develop the business, and I am quite certain that they will have a better chance of keeping employment up in future under the new arrangements.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it after the business statement, and I have my own statement to make. I will take it in the proper place.

Business of the House

5 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the business for next week:

MONDAY 6 APRIL—Opposition Day (Ninth Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Growing Social and Economic Inequalities in Britain".

Motions relating to Scottish Legal Aid and Advice Regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 7 APRIL—There will be a debate on Foreign Affairs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Second Reading of the Family Law Reform Bill *[Lords]*.

Afterwards remaining stages of the Minors' Contracts Bill *[Lords]*, remaining stages of the Recognition of Trusts Bill *[Lords]* and remaining stages of the Reverter of Sites Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL — Remaining stages of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill.

Afterwards motions relating to English and Scottish National Health Service Charges and Services Regulations —details will be given in the *Official Report*—followed by motions on international defence headquarters orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 9 APRIL — Remaining stages of the Debtors (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*. Afterwards, remaining stages of the Pilotage Bill *[Lords]*

FRIDAY 10 APRIL—Adjournment debates.

Mr. Speaker: The House may be asked to consider any Lords amendments which may be received.

[Debate on Monday 6 April:
Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1987
Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1987
Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 365)
Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) (Fees) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 366)
Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 381)
Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 382)
Legal Aid (Scotland) (Children) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 384)

Debates on Wednesday 8 April:
National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) Amendment Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 368)
National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 367)
National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Amendment Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 371)
National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 387)
National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations

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1987 (SI 1987 No. 401)
National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 385)
National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1987 (SI 1987 No. 387)

Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) (Amendment) Order 1987
International Headquarters and Defence Organisations (Designation and Privileges) (Amendment) Order 1987]

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I thank the Leader of the House for his statement. Will he ensure that shortly after the recess the House has a debate on trade relations with Japan, which is an issue which has very serious implications for and repercussions on world markets? The whole House will want to debate the actions that are proposed by the Government.

The House will want also to debate the rural economy and other agricultural matters in view of the social and economic problems that are increasingly afflicting so many rural areas. Can the Leader of the House give an undertaking that such a debate will be arranged soon after the House returns?

Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made about Caterpillar Tractors Ltd., at Uddingston, so that the House can be told whether there has been a response to representations by the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Prime Minister to the Caterpillar International management?

Over the last six weeks or so I have asked the right hon. Gentleman repeatedly for a debate on the proposed privatisation of Rolls-Royce. Obviously, the Government propose to sell the company for next to nothing. It is essential, therefore, that the House should be able to give its view of this attempt to sell off this especially solid piece of the British family silver.

Finally, in the light of recent figures that show that the direct and indirect tax burden on families is now higher than it was in 1979, will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a debate on Government taxation policy separately from the debate on the Finance Bill? Will the right hon. Gentleman also ensure that before that debate a statement is made about reports that Lord Cockfield, the EEC Commissioner, is drawing up plans that would mean VAT being imposed on books, magazines, fuel, children's clothes, and all foods sold in Britain, with the so-called completion of the so-called internal market, which I know individually concerns the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Biffen: I have said to the right hon. Gentleman that I understand the desire for a debate on trade relations with Japan, not least in the context of the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon about the decision to invoke the Financial Services Act provisions in relation to insurance and banking. Perhaps that could be considered through the usual channels.

I am happy to confirm that there will be a debate on the rural economy shortly after Parliament returns from the Easter recess.

I shall refer the right hon. Gentleman's request for a statement on Caterpillar Tractors to my right hon. Friends. In the meantime, hon. Members might like to take account of the fact that the Secretary of State for Scotland will be first for questions on Wednesday.

I do not think that the Leader of the Opposition was being other than mildly contentious when he suggested that Rolls-Royce would be sold off for next to nothing. He knows of the formidable record of success in the Government's privatisation programme. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Gentleman should not make sedentary remarks which only I can hear. I realise how wise he was never to become a merchant banker.

Finally, I take account of the right hon. Gentleman's concern that the tax burden, he alleges, is higher today than it was at the outset of this Government. Normally, the attack is the reverse, but I take account of what he said. I assure him that, in this imperfect world the Second Reading of the Finance Bill is probably the most appropriate occasion for that debate. I note what he said about the VAT ambitions of the European Commissioners, as exemplified by Lord Cockfield. I shall ensure that his observations are brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I thank my right hon. Friend for arranging a debate so quickly on foreign affairs, so that the House will perhaps discover the foreign policy of the Opposition parties, which has not emerged in exchanges so far today.

Yesterday, we had a debate on capital punishment. Another subject that is of great interest to many in this country is the large number of people who are arriving in the United Kingdom from the Republic of Ireland and going straight away to claim social security benefits. This causes great ill-feeling among those who are trying to live without costing the state a penny. I ask for a debate on that matter as early as possible.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend can make his observations about people from the Irish Republic at Question Time on Tuesday, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will be answering questions. On reflection, it may be more appropriate for my hon. Friend's remarks to be made in the debate on foreign affairs, because he, like me, stoutly regards those from the Irish Republic as foreigners.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House have urgent discussions with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Home Secretary to prevent tomorrow the deportation of Mr. Chan Hok-Cheung, who has made serious accusations against a senior RUC officer, involving allegations of extortion? Will he ensure that Mr. Chan Hok-Cheung is kept in Belfast so that he can continue to give full co-operation and assistance to an urgent RUC inquiry that is being conducted into these allegations, and also to conform with the normal procedures, whereby a person making a judicial review application is allowed to remain in the United Kingdom pending the outcome of that inquiry. What is the Home Office trying to cover up by deporting Mr. Chan?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman does not commend his case to me by making allegations of a cover-up, which can be made so easily in the form of question and answer, but he has made a serious request and I shall refer it to those of my right hon. Friends who have relevant responsibilities in this matter.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I do not know whether my right hon. Friend was in his place yesterday when the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) complained about the lack of opportunities to put questions to the Minister with responsibility for sport. We had an excellent debate on sport some weeks ago, and my right hon. Friend has received a letter from myself and the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). I ask that at least five minutes are set aside at one time or another for questions on sport, in the same way as is done for the arts.

Mr. Biffen: I have a slightly unconventional view, in that I am not sure why we have a Minister with responsibility for sport. Our national sporting performance used to be a great deal better without him. However, if a re-ordering of the roster for questions is sought, that can be considered through the usual channels.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Before the important IPU delegation from Ireland comes here next week, will the Leader of the House say what progress has been made on the discussions that have taken place between the usual channels and in other forums in the House on the future of the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier?

What steps will the right hon. Gentleman take to have discussions with all parties in the House if progress is to be made on the Finance Bill in the event of an early election being called?

Mr. Biffen: As to the first point, discussions have proceeded with that degree of circumspection that marks a constructive attitude. As to the second point, I take account of what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I think that it is a rather crude attempt to finesse from me the date of the next general election.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 799 in the names of myself and some of my hon. Friends, which refers to yet another hostile takeover bid, this time for Chamberlain Phipps plc?

[That this House views with considerable concern the hostile bid for Chamberlain Phipps plc by Wardle Storey; feels that the bid is dangerous for the United Kingdom footwear industry, many of whose leading firms rely on Chamberlain Phipps for supplies and have expressed support for the Company; considers that this is the worst kind of financial engineering; and calls upon the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to consider referring the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, pending legislation to deter such dangerous bids.]

Will my right hon. Friend accept that the Government are still deliberating over what to do about such takeover bids? Will he also accept that there is growing concern among many responsible Members on this side of the House about such hostile takeover bids, which threaten manufacturing and jobs in British industry? Will he provide an opportunity for us to express those views in a debate?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend has said. I know that he attaches great importance to the matter. When my right hon. Friend makes a decision, I am certain that he will take account of the recommendations from the Office of Fair Trading. I shall pass to my right hon. Friend the remarks that have just been made.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): In the light of the views on privatisation that have been expressed today and earlier this week, does the Leader of the House agree that we should have a debate as soon as possible on the Government's changing concepts on a share-owning democracy, and particularly on their views on multiple share applications?

Mr. Biffen: With the warm generosity that the hon. Lady brings to these matters, I am sure that she will be able to make her speech on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I bring before the House again the plight of my unfortunate constituents? Some schools in my constituency have been closed for five weeks, and people in sheltered accommodation cannot get baths, cannot get into their laundries and cannot use their telephones because of a quarrel between Ealing council and NALGO; the council, incidentally, having put up the rates by 65 per cent. May we have an urgent statement on what can be done to relieve my constituents of these appalling conditions?

Mr. Biffen: Every time my hon. Friend brings to the House a sad catalogue of what occurs in Ealing I am inclined to parody the words of Beatrice Webb and say that I have seen the Socialism of the future and it does not work. As to what may be done from the House, my hon. Friend is a skilled parliamentarian and he knows that there are occasions, particularly this week, when Back Benchers may raise these matters. I wish him every success in any endeavours to that end.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House Department of the Environment news release No. 158, which gives notice of a proposal by the London Docklands Development Corporation to redevelop some 700 acres in docklands and to create 7,000 homes and 48,000 jobs? Does the Leader of the House approve of the practice whereby a planted parliamentary question is asked by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) about a matter appertaining to Newham without the hon. Member having had the courtesy to advise any Newham Members about it?

Secondly, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that such a preposterous claim, which the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction calls the most exciting redevelopment proposal in the Western world, should be made through a written question and a press release, with no statement from the Dispatch Box? The other day we had a statement on the Turks and Caicos Islands. The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) had to ask where they were. That statement involved 2,800 people. Surely a claim to create 48,000 jobs is serious enough to be the subject of a statement by a Minister at the Dispatch Box, so that hon. Members from Newham and elsewhere may probe to find out just how true the promises are. Is this not just a pre-election stunt yet again?

Mr. Speaker: Briefly.

Mr. Banks: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Will the Leader of the House please tell us how Ministers select subjects for statements? Should we not have a statement about such a serious matter, and fewer statements about small fires in chip pans?

Mr. Biffen: I have to tell the hon. Member, whose enthusiasm belies the fact that he has only recently arrived in the House, that the parliamentary undergrowth is

[Mr. Biffen]

strewn with planted questions, and has been so over the decades. I am sorry that he feels so deprived in these circumstances. I shall, of course, draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): May we have a debate urgently on the megalomaniac outburst by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), as reported in a newspaper today, in which he threatens to bring parliamentary government to a standstill in the event of a hung Parliament and threatens to vote down the Queen's Speech, without even reading it, unless he has written it? Is it not disgraceful that this outbreak of immoderation should take place now, just when the Prime Minister is uniting the nation?

Mr. Biffen: I read something of these remarks. In all charity we must conclude that they are but a newspaper report of what the right hon. Gentleman is alleged to have said. What worried me was the tremendous emphasis that was placed upon the use of a referendum as a means of government. That is historically the technique of the authoritarian Right. *[Interruption.]* The Leader of the Opposition is indicating to me that nothing has changed in regard to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). We shall have to live and see, but at least we have been warned.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a substantive motion to be put down so that we may debate the rising tide of City fraud and the conduct of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best)?

Mr. Biffen: No, I have no plans for such a debate this week. Papers in respect of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) have been passed by the Department of Trade and Industry to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who will consider, in the light of the usual criteria, whether to ask the police to investigate. It would not be right for me to comment further, and I do not intend to do so.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): While suspecting that my right hon. Friend is more interested in clearing the decks than in looking for new candidates for legislation, may I ask whether he is aware of the frustration, which is turning to anger, among fishermen in the south-west over the continued increase in the number of ex-Spanish boats in the area? He will be aware that a working party has been considering for a long time the registration of shipping vessels. It has concluded its work. Will he kindly have a word with his right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Transport to see whether a Bill agreed by both sides of the House could be brought forward to deal with this acute problem?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to give sympathetic consideration to what my hon. Friend has said, but he will realise that all these matters none the less have complexities. The important thing is to get not only speedy but well drafted legislation.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the Leader of the House note that over the past three weeks I have received information relating to the nuclear power station at Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, pointing out that there have been major faults in reactor 1 and reactor 2, that there have been announcements containing misleading information, and that a crucial unit of equipment designed to maintain the critical temperature in the carbon dioxide coolant liquefaction plant has not been subjected to the safety survey that is statutorily required?

Since last Saturday I have sent four telexes to the Central Electricity Generating Board, with the last two being copied to the Department of Energy, marked for ministerial attention. None of those has received an acknowledgment. Does the Leader of the House agree that, because of public anxiety on these matters, the position is intolerable? Will he use his good offices with the Department of Energy to ensure that it responds in a manner more responsible than that that is displayed on the Government Benches? Will he urge the Department of Energy to get the CEGB to do likewise?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly look into the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman and see what I can do to secure answers for him.

Mr. Peter Lilley (St. Albans): May I endorse the suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) that we have an early debate on constitutional matters to enable the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) to elaborate his views, as reported in *The Independent*?

There is another aspect of the proposal for referendums apart from the authoritarian point that my right hon. Friend mentioned. We need an explanation of how a minority Government could use referendums to govern if, presumably they could not get agreement on the wording and the timing of the referendums, and could not get the necessary legislation through a House in which they did not have a majority.

Mr. Biffen: I think that the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport was thinking and writing aloud. In so doing he was living out the nature that he has revealed over recent months. The more we have the experience of the right hon. Gentleman thinking aloud, the more we will realise that he is not a suitable candidate for high office.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House agree that since the Register of Members' Interests, in which Members of Parliament have to record the number of directorships and the number of shareholdings above 5 per cent. that they hold was established, it has, under the people's capitalism, become a little outdated and ought to be reviewed in a more comprehensive manner? For example, it should be able to show whether an hon. Member had been involved in multi-share buying. That could be included in a separate section. Who knows what will happen with British Gas? There has not been a trawl of British Gas. Many other Tory Members of Parliament may have made multiple share applications.

A footnote could be included in the Register for the alliance. As members of the alliance are supposed to be working together, the instances when they do not should be recorded. They would take up a page or two. I shall tell the Leader of the House of the latest instance. In the student elections the Liberals voted for the Trots—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for business questions.

Mr. Skinner: This will be my last sentence. In the recent student elections the Liberals voted for the Trots and refused to vote for the SDP. I reckon that if an appendix could be added to the Register of Members' Interests, it would be much more comprehensive than it is at present.

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that that was the most subtle observation. Happily, the responsibility for the Register does not fall upon me. The hon. Gentleman is well able to make representations directly to the Chairman of the appropriate Committee.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my right hon. Friend agree to an early debate on the techniques that are used when representatives from this country, whether from the Government or the Opposition, travel abroad to meet senior figures from other Governments to establish how much time is spent in meetings between them? It would help if we allowed the Leader of the Opposition to give a detailed explanation of how much time he spent with President Reagan and if we could be told the techniques used for timing that visit. The results could usefully be contrasted with the Prime Minister's triumphant visit to the Soviet Union and the amount of time that she spent in fruitful, productive and intimate discussions with the Secretary-General of the Soviet Communist party.

Mr. Biffen: It is my task to consider all fertile and innovative proposals to widen the nature of public debate so that they can be contained within our traditional procedures. My hon. Friend will have to try to persuade all those who can enlighten us on these matters to use the foreign affairs debate as the occasion.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Is there any prospect of a debate in the near future on the desperate shortage of resources for schools? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, in my constituency, particularly those parts that are disadvantaged, there are not enough funds for schools even to be painted once every 15 years, and that the more disadvantaged the area the worse the situation becomes because parents are not able to afford to chip in to make up for the resources that central Government and local government cannot provide? If the Leader of the House recognises that this is a serious matter throughout the country, may we please either have a statement or a debate on it very soon?

Mr. Biffen: Apart from the fact that the hon. and learned Gentleman has very skilfully made much of the speech that would have been made in a debate on this matter, I must point out that if he feels so strongly about the matter I am certain that he could bring it within order for the Opposition day debate.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Further to my right hon. Friend's point about the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) tending to think aloud, does he agree that the right hon. Gentleman is also tending to transmit those thoughts to writing in a document entitled "The Time has Come"? Does my right hon. Friend think that that publication can more reasonably be described as an Armageddon for the future of this country?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that it is entirely within club rules that this lively discussion should take place in the absence of the Leader of the Social Democratic party and his entire posse of parliamentary followers, but my hon. Friend has made a constructive point.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware that, following a motion moved by the then Leader of the House in 1947, Mr. Garry Allighan was expelled from the House, and that in 1954 another Member of Parliament, Mr. Peter Baker, was expelled from the House for activities that were unbecoming hon. Members? In the light of the admission by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best), should not the Leader of the House table a similar motion, because the hon. Gentleman has admitted an offence? Is it not for the Leader of the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All that the hon. Member can do is to ask for a debate, because he will have heard—I hope that he was here—what the Leader of the House said on this matter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I was just coming to that, Mr. Speaker. May we have a statement from a Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry about the fact that when the original trawl of people who had purchased shares in British Telecom was made, the name of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn never surfaced? We want to know why.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Biffen: I have already referred to the situation in respect of my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn. I have already said that I would say nothing further—and certainly I would say nothing further to remarks as sactimonious and distasteful as those.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I welcome Tuesday's debate on family law reform, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that it will be in order to discuss the shocking increase in divorce and the fact that it is so easy to obtain a divorce after just one year and that it is contributing to a moral decline in society? Will he also confirm that an hon. Member, such as myself, will be able to highlight the fact that a number of top television personalities are specialising in announcing that they are having children out of wedlock and they have no intention of marrying their partners? Does my right hon. Friend believe that that helps to maintain family life?

Mr. Biffen: As for the part of my hon. Friend's observations which I can answer, whether it would be in order to have such a debate would be a matter for the Chair.

Easter Adjournment (Debates)

5.27 pm

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 10 April up to eight hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning and the results will be made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Social Security

5.28 pm

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. John Major): I beg to move

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 16th March, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following motions:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Child Benefit (General) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 357), dated 5th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Social Security Benefit (Dependency) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 355), dated 5th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Supplementary Benefit (Conditions of Entitlement) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 358), dated 5th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th March, be annulled.

That the draft Social Security (Class 1 Contributions—Contracted-out Percentages) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.

That the draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.

That the draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables —Transitional Provisions) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment and Uprating Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 16th March, be approved.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 317), dated 3rd March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Expenses (General) Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 481), dated 19th March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th March, be annulled.

Mr. Major: Even the most casual observer of the Order Paper will note that we are this afternoon debating a wide range of social security matters. Some are technical; others will generally be regarded as benevolent and some may conceivably be regarded as mildly contentious. A number are familiar old friends. I will deal with them as briefly as possible—confident that my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State will pick up any outstanding matters with his usual skill.

It might be helpful at the outset if I refer to the three statutory instruments which deal with the terms of contracting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a statutory duty to review those terms at least every five years. His report and that of the Government Actuary were laid with the statutory instruments, and they reveal how technically complex this subject is. Widespread consultation took place on those terms in 1986 following the preparation of memoranda by the Government Actuary. His formal report took into account comments that were received.

Since 1978 schemes have been able to contract-out if they guarantee to provide a pension which is broadly

equivalent to the state additional pension. In return a reduction, which is known in common parlance as the rebate, is made to the national insurance contributions for contracted-out employments. Since 1978 the rebate has included a contingency margin. The purpose of that is to allow for uncertainty caused by accrued right to benefit being related to future earnings trends and future returns from investments. Safeguards also exist when schemes have to buy back into the state scheme. The assurance given to schemes has meant that 90 per cent. of the 11 million members of occupational pension schemes have been contracted out.

It is the Government's intention to increase the spread of occupational and personal pensions coverage, and the 1986 Act will provide an impetus for that. We expect most people to retire in the future with a pension of their own, and to help them do so we have introduced contracted-out personal pensions and money purchase occupational schemes. The minimum amount to be paid to such schemes is equal to the amount of the rebate that will apply to salary related schemes.

The Government Actuary reports that the cost of providing guaranteed minimum pensions has been decreasing as the average rate of accrual of guaranteed minimum pensions declines. That is because those who were in the scheme from 1978 enjoyed a faster rate of accrual than those joining later. The cost is calculated currently at 6·25 per cent. and from 1988 to 1993 it will be 5·4 per cent. of reckonable earnings. These figures include a contingency margin of 7·5 per cent. My right hon. Friend has decided that from 1988 and 1993 the rebate should be 5·8 per cent. That will include a small additional margin to provide a further safeguard against any additional costs arising from the implementation of the 1986 Act.

We wish to see existing contracted-out schemes continue to flourish alongside new personal pension and money purchase schemes. The amount of the rebate will, in our judgment, assist in that aim. The additional margin will apply from 1988-93 only. The 5·8 per cent. rebate will be shared so that employers receive 3·8 per cent. and employees 2 per cent. That reflects the current apportionment between employers and employees.

In some circumstances contracted-out schemes may transfer their liabilities for guaranteed minimum pensions to the state scheme. This buying-back is achieved by paying premiums. Actuarial tables represent the average cost of providing guaranteed minimum pensions. That cost is adjusted—to allow for investment yields at the time of the buy-back—by a device called the market level indicator. That is to prevent schemes being in difficulty in paying the premiums if there is a fall in the market level of their investments. The new market level indicators will provide for this, but will reduce the scope of profits to be made from ceasing to contract-out.

New personal pensions will be introduced in January 1988, so we must provide for premiums in the event of schemes ceasing to be approved as appropriate by the Occupational Pensions Board before April 1988. Although this is extremely unlikely the necessary legislative cover against that contingency has been provided by the transitional regulations.

From what I have said, hon. Members will see not only how complex this subject is but how these three statutory instruments fit in to the Government's broader pension strategy.

With a small measure of relief, which may be shared by hon. Members, I shall move from the intricate world of pensions to regulation No. 1 and related regulations on the Order Paper. Those regulations, together with those which are for negative resolutions, put into effect a number of changes which mainly affect benefits for children and young people and for people in residential care homes. The changes are, without exception, are consistent with established policy. We believe that children, properly supported within the family, should be encouraged to complete their education and not to slip early into the "benefit culture". We accept our duty to help the young who are deprived of family support and the sick and elderly who need to be cared for in a home. We wish to ensure that children with no parents to care for them should, wherever possible, be absorbed into normal family life. Those aims are reflected clearly in the regulations now before the House.

As the House will know, as a result of a commissioners' decision in 1985, some Easter school leavers with school examinations still to take were able to obtain supplementary benefit as unemployed. We take the view that that is wrong and that those young people should be regarded as remaining in full-time education until they have completed their examinations. The regulations before the House will restore this traditional intention, so that these young people will become entitled to benefit at the same time as summer school leavers. Child benefit, and dependency additions to other benefits, will, in these circumstances, remain payable to the parents. We are also ensuring that children who leave school before they are legally entitled so to do will not, as a result, be able to obtain benefit earlier than they would otherwise have done.

Mr. Archie Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It would be helpful to the House if, in the course of discussing each of the statutory instrument changes that the Government are bringing forward in these regulations, the Minister will give us some estimates of the savings. I do not want to put that pejoratively, I could call them cuts —*[Interruption.]*— the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) does so. It would be helpful if the Minister could give even a ball park figure of the amount of money about which we are talking in the course of the changes that the Government are making.

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) proceeds on an assumption —the reason for which I cannot imagine—that each matter that I have mentioned is necessarily related to savings. A good many of them may not be related to savings, and as we proceed the hon. Gentleman may see that that is clear.

The regulations that we are discussing re-establish another policy intention following a commissioners' decision which held that entitlement to child benefit remains even though it is not payable. Consequently, child dependency additions and guardians' allowance, which depend on entitlement to child benefit, can continue to be payable when child benefit stops. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire may have noted that point; I see clearly that he did not. The need for child dependency additions, as well as the need for child benefit, is removed when a young person works.

Finally, among the changes affecting young people in education, we are expanding the categories of youngsters

[Mr. Major]

—the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire may care to note this — who can receive supplementary benefit even though they are continuing in full-time non-advanced education. *[Interruption.]* I cannot give the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire the increased cost for that, because it is not in front of me.

Mr. Kirkwood: I am perfectly prepared to be even-handed about this. If it is costing the Government money I am happy to discuss that as well, but may we have both sets of figures because I think that that is important?

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will know, if he heard what I said at the outset of my remarks, that a large number of these matters are familiar old friends and we have discussed the additional costings and savings on a number of occasions. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has lately appeared in the Chamber from I know not where——

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Minister has only just started.

Mr. Major: —with a will o' the wisp air and that mischievous expression that we have come to know and enjoy so much in social security debates during recent months.

We propose to include among those who may receive supplementary benefit, even though they are continuing in full-time non-advanced education, young people who do not live with their parents, and who cannot be supported by them because their parents are sick, disabled, in prison or unable to enter the country.

There are some further benevolent changes affecting children without parental care. The main change is to introduce special provision for the treatment, for supplementary benefit purposes, of local authority custodianship allowances. The intention is to ensure that no family will have its supplementary benefit entitlement unduly reduced. Hon. Members may be aware that courts can award the custody of a child to a caring family where there is still contact with the natural parent, so adoption is not appropriate. Local authorities can pay custodianship allowances to such families and may do so particularly where the child was previously boarded-out with the family. A child taken into custodianship—like an adopted child — is part of the family and so supplementary benefit will be payable. An allowance from the local authority will be treated in the same way as an adoption allowance. The amount of the allowance which is over and above the child's supplementary benefit requirements will be disregarded.

The other amendment corrects an unforeseen interaction between two sets of regulations which permitted child benefit to be paid when a child maintained by the local authority is placed with a family for adoption. That has never been the intention and the amendment restores the former position. Any families already receiving child benefit in those unusual circumstances will of course, have their entitlement protected.

We are also making other minor and technical changes on which, in the interest of brevity, I shall not eleborate.

Two further provisions, which, on reflection, I shall mention, affect people in education and training. The supplementary benefit regulations currently provide for all students to be treated as having a grant. Students who are in fact not entitled to an award may have a parental covenant treated as the equivalent of a grant. In a small number of cases, usually where a non-grant-aided student is being supported by a working partner who becomes unemployed, those rules have the unintended result of reducing the couple's joint benefit entitlement. We have no wish to penalise claimants in those circumstances, so the draft regulations provide instead that the students should be assumed to receive only the assessed parental contribution to an actual award. In considering a covenant made to a non grant-aided student, we shall treat it as if it were a award—an amount—equal to the appropriate standard rate of grant.

I come now to the changes that we propose in board and lodging and the regulations which deal with supplementary benefit paid to people in residential care homes and nursing homes. There has been some criticism that the limits are too low and that people without means can no longer obtain places in homes. That is not a general criticism that I am inclined to accept.

New figures have just become available which show quite clearly that that is not the case. The provisional results of the quarterly statistical inquiry, reveal that in February 1986 there were 90,000 people in residential care and nursing homes being helped by supplementary benefit; that is twice the 1984 figure. That hardly supports the contention of many of our critics.

One concern shared by all hon. Members is whether the availability of supplementary benefit to help with fees for homes has led to people going into residential care when that may not be the most appropriate form of care for them. I understand that concern. Preliminary results of a survey by the social policy research unit of York university, which has a high reputation, clearly reveal that 93 per cent. of supplementary benefit claimants in residential care homes were assessed as needing such care. That matter will be of some interest to several hon. Members, and my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary will seek to elaborate upon that survey later if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Is my hon. Friend aware that in counties such as Berkshire the cost of residential accommodation is extremely high because of the capital values of property?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend points up a problem that we know exists in various parts of Britain. There is a distinct difficulty from time to time when someone seeks to establish a home in an area where property has a high capital cost and I entirely understand the difficulty to which that gives rise. My hon. Friend may know that we are reviewing various aspects of residential care policy, and I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's observations on that point.

In the regulations before us today we are providing extra help for people in four specific areas. First, the limit will rise in residential care homes for elderly people—by far the majority of homes — by £5 to £130 a week. Secondly, the special limit of £140 for very dependent or blind elderly people will be increased by £5 to £145.

Both the evidence of the review and other evidence convinced us that the limit for younger physically

handicapped people should be raised. It will rise by £10 to £190 a week. Extra help will also be given to people in nursing homes. The basic limit, which applies to most, but not all elderly people, will be increased by £5 to £175 a week.

There are some other changes affecting people in homes. We have always assumed that charges should cover the full range of personal services and amenities. Indeed, that has been a general assumption. However, it seems that the current regulations permit additional weekly amounts to be claimed for items such as heating and laundry, which should, in our view, be provided and charged for by homes as part of their normal service. It was our understanding that they were being so treated. Therefore, the regulations restore our intention that such expenses should not qualify for additional payments. However, those separate charges can be included as part of the home's charge and met in full as long as the total charge falls within the appropriate limit for the area of home and care provided. Claimants already receiving the additional amounts will have their total entitlement protected at the point of change.

Let me deal now with some miscellaneous changes within the regulations. First, the draft regulations ensure that a person can be treated as available for work if he is already working fewer than 30 hours a week but is available to take additional work to bring himself up to the full required number of hours. Secondly, we are providing that statutory maternity pay, when it is introduced on 6 April, will be treated as an income that is taken fully into account for supplementary benefit purposes.

Thirdly, we are making certain that extra-statutory payments, which are made from time to time by the Secretary of State for Social Services to compensate for defects in regulations until the law can be changed to achieve the policy intention, will be treated for supplementary benefit purposes in exactly the same way as the benefit that they replace.

Finally, we are correcting an error in regulations which means that at present the whole of the income from a mortgage protection insurance policy for mortgage interest payments is disregarded during the first 16 weeks of a claim. We always intended that only 50 per cent. should be disregarded, because only 50 per cent. of the mortgage interest payment is included in the supplementary benefit assessment. This unusual lapse in our regulations was spotted by the eagle eye of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and, fortunately, also by our lawyers, for I would not wish her to bear the sole blame for having uncovered that mistake.

In addition to all the changes I have described, there are a number of small clarificatory and technical amendments that are not contentious, of which I shall spare the House a detailed description.

Let me deal now with the Social Fund Maternity and Funeral Expenses (General) Regulations—item No. 10 on the Order Paper. The regulations give power to prescribe the amounts which can be paid to people with low incomes for maternity expenses, and the circumstances in which both maternity and funeral expenses payments may be made. The House will be familiar with them and they probably require no further explanation from me at this stage. Indeed, I suspect that many people may consider that we have debated those at substantial length over the past few weeks, as indeed we have on earlier occasions.

The final regulations that we are debating this afternoon relate to the entitlement to unemployment benefit of people working on the community programme. I set out the rationale for those fully in my statement to the House on 3 March and I see no particular need to reiterate those points today. However, if the hon. Member for Birkenhead wishes to raise any matter relating to it, I shall either be happy to deal with it now, or my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary will seek to do so when he replies.

This is an omnibus collection of orders with a miscellaneous content. I commend the affirmative regulations to the House and invite my hon. Friends to reject the Opposition's prayers if they are pressed to a Division. We would be well advised to accept the regulations, and I hope that it will be generally recognised that they will be better on than off the statute book.

5.50 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I shall attempt to follow the pattern established by the Minister and deal first with the pensions regulations.

I agree with the Minister that the background documents are long, and I suspect that most hon. Members would find them rather tedious—although I, of course, found them fascinating. A couple of general points arise in connection with the background to the pension provisions, which the regulations highlight.

The Minister knows—and I hope the House knows, too — that Labour Members are extremely unhappy about the Government's decision to lower the standards of provision both in occupational pension schemes and in the state earnings-related scheme. We particularly deplore the Government's intention to encourage people to take out so-called personal pensions because, in doing so, they will be encouraging people to put the whole, or a very large part, of their pension provision at risk, with no underpinning or guarantee.

I note that the background document confirms our view. First, it states that it will be assumed that, in return for contributions paid into a personal scheme, people will receive some sort of guaranteed minimum pension and that that assumed sum will be deducted from their entitlement, whether or not the investment made actually provides such a sum.

Secondly, the document states that, in some circumstances, premiums — in particular a protected rights premium for personal pensions—can be paid back into the state scheme to give protection to benefits. The document suggests that even if the sum is more than enough to secure the minimum rights in the state scheme the balance will not be refundable, and, furthermore, that no extra entitlement will be offered in consideration of the extra moneys paid in. That strikes me as an example of the "Heads I win, tails you lose" approach, which is fairly typical of the Government's approach on many social security matters.

The resources regulations have been described as "tidying up" regulations, although it seems to us that the tidying up may result in more restrictive legislation. I listened to the Minister's remarks about the effects on students of the changed parental contributions, but I should like him to answer three points. First, on Manpower Services Commission allowances, I reiterate the remarks of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that it would be helpful to

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

know the number of people involved and the financial consequences, in this case I think that savings would result.

Secondly, with regard to students, it appears to us that the change in the treatment of covenants may be more restrictive than the existing regulations, as only a small group of cohabiting students seem to be affected, whereas at present any student who is married or cohabiting is affected.

I am more concerned about a third matter. We are not sure whether the regulation that extends the deeming provision to the summer vacation is defective. I note that the definition of a student includes someone who was a student immediately before the first day of his normal summer vacation. Under the provision as drafted, there is thus no termination date; someone could technically remain a student for 50 or 60 years. I am sure that that is not what the Government intend, and I hope that the regulation will not have that effect. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's observations on that.

How many people will be affected by the dependency regulations and, in particular, by the extension of the possible reduction of dependency additions to invalid care allowances? Will the Minister give us an estimate of the number of people likely to be affected and of what the savings will be?

I shall consider the child benefit regulations and the conditions of entitlement regulations together. I shall press the Under-Secretary of State on the Minister's remarks about people being available for a 30-hour week. Perhaps he will cast some light on the reason why it is necessary to make the change.

Our main worry about the regulations is that they will interact to debar some school leavers from claiming benefit. The Minister will not be surprised to learn that we do not think the Government have behaved well in this matter. At present, school leavers have the right to draw benefit.

I understand that the Government took a test case to a tribunal of commissioners who most unkindly let them down by ruling that each case should be dealt with on its merits. One can imagine the wave of horror that must have crossed the Department at that terrible suggestion. The Government then had to fall back on the ignorance of potential claimants about their rights and about the benefits available — an ignorance which they hoped would be long-lasting. Now, thanks to Youth Aid and my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), much has been done to overcome that ignorance, and the Government have been forced to change the regulations and claw back the £2 million that the provision cost them last year. I am not so much concerned with the £2 million that the Government may have lost as with the fact that school leavers could lose £350 as a result of the changes.

The Minister referred — I hope ironically — to the Government's wish not to allow school leavers to become part of an unemployment culture. Sadly, well over 1 million young people are now unemployed—a fact that has done far more to put that idea into the heads of people on the verge of leaving school than could possibly be done by changing the benefits regulations. Like the Social Security Advisory Committee, the Government's own committee, we believe that there is a danger that, as a result of the changes, young people will choose to leave school before they take their examinations, and that that could disadvantage them even more.

We are worried, not only about the principle of the regulations, but about their practicability. For example, the cut-off point in the child benefit regulations is the time at which a pupil is entered on the list for a public examination. I do not know whether the Department consulted the Department of Education and Science before coming up with that bright idea. It did not consult the examinations boards, which are independent of the Department of Education and Science. As any ex-Minister from the Department knows, they go their own sweet way.

It appears that the proposal hit on by the Department of Health and Social Security is impracticable. Almost invariably, it is the head teacher, or another senior teacher in a school, who decides whether to enter pupils for examinations—frequently without consultation. They do so if they think that a pupil has a chance of passing those examinations. However, if—as is presumably intended by the regulations—a pupil discovers that he has been entered for the examinations and wants to withdraw because he will lose £350 if he does not, he may not be able to do so. He would almost certainly not be able to do so this year because we are so near to the examinations season.

Arrangements differ from one board to another. Some boards allow a student to withdraw up to a certain date, some allow students to withdraw up to a certain date but keep the fees, and some do not allow withdrawal after a final date. In other words, a pupil may be deprived of benefit through a decision of which he is completely unaware and which he is not in a position to alter, especially when a school may lose its fees. In such circumstances, I can well imagine a head teacher insisting that a pupil's name remains on the list of entrants.

Mr. Major: The matter has been around for a considerable time. Our original proposals were announced as long ago as 17 October last year. I have before me a list of responses to the draft proposals, including one from the Secondary Heads Association. It can hardly be said, therefore, that the educational establishment was unaware of the proposals.

Mrs. Beckett: I take the point, but I am not so much concerned about the Secondary Heads Association, or with head teachers generally. They may, indeed, have known the effect of the proposals. However, I wonder how many pupils the Minister thinks were apprised of the implications for their benefit entitlement — if, that is, they were consulted at all about their names being entered. I imagine that the answer is "Few, if any." The Government are setting an unusual—I hope unique—and dangerous precedent if they deny benefit on the ground of action not taken by the people involved, and possibly outwith their control.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Because of the dates involved, the regulations are particularly unfair on pupils who have taken a practical examination as part of the syllabus, but still have every intention of leaving at Easter. If they have taken part of a practical examination, under the board's regulations they cannot withdraw from the examination, so they are caught. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, very few pupils are aware that when they enter such courses they might lose benefit.

Mrs. Beckett: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. It is all the more unfortunate that the Government did not take the advice of the SSAC and, if they had to set a terminal date, set it after the examinations, rather than at the end of the Easter term.

Mr. Bennett: People will be penalised for taking examinations.

Mrs. Beckett: Indeed. It is undesirable in itself, but it is even more so when it is a result of someone else's decision, which the claimant cannot alter.

Let me now turn to the requirements and resources regulations. We are pleased that the Government have seen fit to increase some of the limits for board and lodging, but we strongly deplore their refusal to re-examine all the limits for ordinary board and lodging payments and other allowances, such as meals allowances. The limits on benefits payable for ordinary board and lodging have not been changed since April 1985. Before that, they were frozen, although the courts recently ruled that that was illegal. Meals allowances, for example, have been frozen since 1984, although there have been substantial increases in costs since that date. It is particularly deplorable that the Minister has chosen not to increase those limits. Young people, often homeless, will be the hardest hit.

Even where the limits have been increased, there is still cause for concern. The increases that have been made up to now do not necessarily make up for the Government's earlier decision to include tenants' allowances within the sums to be paid, instead of paying such allowances in addition to the board and lodging allowances.

We are also concerned about the decision to abolish the additional requirements claim for special diets, baths and a range of other costs applying to those in residential nursing homes. The Minister said that such claims could still be made, but they must be within the maximum limits. As the Minister knows perfectly well, there is a widespread view that the maximum limits are insufficient, even before additional costs are added. That strikes me as casuistry, to say the least.

I had occasion today to look at the press release announcing the increased allowances for those in residential homes. Although the press release was self-congratulatory about the wonderful job that the Government were doing, I saw no mention of their proposal to abolish the additional requirements allowances. I should like to hear from the Under-Secretary of State how many people are affected, and how much will be saved at the expense of people who must be among the poorest and most disadvantaged in the community, or they would not be claimants in the first place.

I should also like to hear from the Under-Secretary of State about the reduction in transitional protection included in the regulations. I do not recall hearing the Minister mention that, although one of my hon. Friends may have been addressing me at the time. When the regulations were introduced, the Minister and the Secretary of State made much of the fact that those already in receipt of payments would be protected; that they would continue to receive the same allowance and would not suffer. It now appears, however, that the Government are seeking to reduce that protection. It seems, from the items that the Government have included, that all claimants now receiving transitional protection may be affected. The sums now paid may be frozen at the present level.

The Minister mentioned that the regulations contain a correcting provision to bring what the law says into line with the Department's advice to its officers on the treatment of mortgage insurance. We note with regret that that will put claimants in an even worse position. It makes even more irrelevant the weasel words uttered in the Chamber when we debated the principle of taking the responsibility for mortgage interest payments off the unemployed for the first 16 weeks of payment, and the protection that would nevertheless be available to them through mortgage insurance policies. Opposition Members pointed out — and the matter was even touched on, most unusually, by Conservative Members — that mortgage insurance policies were not all that marvellous, that they frequently did not offer any money for the initial period of unemployment, when the Government were cutting their support, and that in any case such assistance was least likely to be available to those most in need of it.

However, those words — and the criticisms made in the Consumers Association magazine *Which?* this week about the value of mortgage protection policies — pale into insignificance when we learn that the Government propose to penalise even those who have had the opportunity to take out such policies. It is particularly unfortunate that the Government should take such a step when we realise that 70 per cent. of those who will lose part of their allowances against mortgage interest are likely to be sick or elderly. The Government try to justify their action by talking about the work incentive, but those people will not be affected in the slightest by the work incentive. They will, however, be affected by the cuts in their benefits. All the comments made in our last debate on this issue apply with even more force when we realise that the Government intend to deprive those who have policies of part of their benefit.

The changes in maternity and death grants have been debated fairly recently — owing, of course, to the Government's incompetence in being unable to get their legislation right. They intend to allow a potentially wider group to claim sums towards funeral costs, for example, by the extension to people who draw housing benefit. However, since the decision is accompanied by a steady and wide-sweeping reduction in the number of people entitled to draw such benefit — through other changes that the Government are making — it is not so much a cause for congratulation as they seem to think. It should go on record that the Government are halving the maternity grant available to the poorest mothers, a step that can only enforce the divisions in health identified in recent Health Education Council reports.

Last, but by no means least, let me deal with the provisions for the community programme. The programme was set up in specific terms which made it likely that about 70 per cent. of those involved would be in part-time work. However, the Government have decided to deem it full-time work, although the courts have ruled otherwise. This is a particularly mean-minded saving. It flies in the face of all that is said about the need for training and the Government's wish to reduce unemployment. That applies both to this provision and to the provision on child benefit. The main purpose is to keep school leavers, and those involved in this change, off the unemployment register until the end of September, presumably in the hope that school leavers, at least, will not show up in the figures until after the general election.

[Mrs. Beckett]

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaser was foolish enough to say when he was Secretary of State for Employment that the Government would not be worth re-electing if the unemployment figure was still 3 million at the time of the next general election. I must at least give the Government credit for putting every effort into reducing unemployment, at least on paper, but the reality is very different.

The feature that concerns me most — this is apart from the impact on those on the community programme in terms of loss of hope and depriving them of benefits that they can now draw—is that claimants with families may suffer especially. Many of these claimants will be entitled only to the community programme part-time income of about £67 a week, which is less than their supplementary benefit entitlement would be. That is the result if the Department does not rule that they are in full-time work. It is less also than they would be entitled to receive should they be eligible for family income supplement. As those in part-time work, as I understand it, are not entitled to family income supplement, and as the Government have ruled that in effect those in part-time work on the community programme are in full-time work, will there now be an entitlement to claim the family income supplement? It seems that that would be entirely logical and would help to reduce the charge that could otherwise be made against the Government that they are deliberately reducing the standard of living of low-paid families in work to keep them off the unemployment register.

We shall certainly vote against these regulations. There are others that we would have voted against had they not been part of a package of 10. We do not wish to keep the House sitting for a considerable period and doing nothing more useful than registering time after time the size of the Government's majority. We shall vote against the regulations that make changes in the community programme, which are a further development of the policy to keep people trapped in unemployment and poverty, with consequences for themselves, their families and the country that could be dire. They are a step along the road which the Government seem to be pursuing of introducing American-style workfare policies. It has been confirmed that there are jobs that need to be done, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made it clear that it is no longer true, if it ever was—we would argue that it has not been true for a long time, if at all—that the money is not available adequately to pay people to undertake them. Instead, the Government choose to divert the money by introducing tax cuts, for example.

There is abundant evidence that the Government's policy towards the unemployed is callous and cruel, as well as dangerous, given the likely social and health consequences. The Government should be bitterly ashamed of their policy towards the unemployed, and they are clearly somewhat ashamed because they are so much keener to talk about our intentions than about their policies. As only self-interest seems to motivate Conservative Members, I remind them that many of them may be unemployed after the next general election.

6.14 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): This package of measures is to be welcomed as a rational and sensible response to a series of social security problems and anomalies. It is not worthy of the usual tirade that we have heard from the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett).

The increases in the residential care allowances are to be much welcomed, and may be slightly overdue. The comments that my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security made about the York study are important. It appears that one of the serious concerns about residential care policy has been removed. The emphasis now has to be upon the methods and types of inspection and whether any homes should not be liable to inspection, for example. This may not be entirely within my hon. Friend's purview, but it is something that I hope he will be considering in somewhat greater detail.

The hon. Member for Derby, South was withering about statutory instrument No. 317, but her response did not take into account the fact that it has been a fundamental principle of benefit entitlement that those who work part-time on a regular basis are not entitled to unemployment benefit on the days when they do not normally work. That rule has applied until the recent commissioners' decision in respect of those on the community programme. That decision overturned the practice for four decades while affecting only one programme. It seems to be anomalous to argue against the practice when it has been operated as a principle by Governments of both parties over a long period.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Galley: I hope that the hon. Lady will not mind too much and will not shed too many tears if I do not give way to allow her to intervene. I have only a few minutes in which to elaborate my arguments, and I would like to make progress.

It would be nonsense if someone receiving earnings from a state-funded employment scheme was able also to claim unemployment benefit from the state as well. It would be especially wrong when the majority of community programme workers are already earning in excess of any unemployment benefit entitlement that they may have. It would be wrong also for someone employed part time on the community programme to be treated rather more favourably than someone employed part time in the private sector. If that were the position, it would in some instances be a serious disincentive for people to seek and take jobs that are available.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for taking speedy and effective action. I reiterate the hope that I have expressed previously that the regulations are legally watertight and that there will be no further difficulties with them.

Mr. Frank Field: Such confidence!

Mr. Galley: I have great confidence in my hon. Friend. Now we have an eminent lawyer as a DHSS Under-Secretary of State — I refer to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell)—I have particular cause for confidence.

Mr. Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that issue?

Mr. Galley: No, I shall not give way. I have only a short time available to me and I must get on.

Statutory instrument No. 358, which deals with entitlement to benefit during the final summer term prior to examinations, is contentious. It is encouraging and

interesting that the Social Security Advisory Committee's report on this issue has been broadly supportive of the Government. There is a clear statement in the report, as follows:

"It is a basic principle of supplementary benefit, and one which we accept, that supplementary benefit is not an appropriate means of supporting those in full-time education."

The debate has centred upon the determination of full-time education, and if students are undertaking study as part of or as a corollary to full-time education with a view to taking examinations within a few weeks' time, it would seem axiomatic that they continue in full-time education. The situation which arose after the commissioners' decision in 1985 led to a complex and nonsensical result, and that was obvious from the forms that officials had to operate at the time. Fortunately, the regulations that are before us will remedy the nonsense.

Those who are not attending school during their final summer term prior to examinations but are studying at home are usually expected to remain in contact with their school. I should be happier if there were greater supervision and clearer distinction between employment and education. If pupils are able to undertake a YTS scheme or work during their summer term, that may detract from their studies and be to their disadvantage. To allow them to receive supplementary benefit when others are taking examinations and still attending school, and therefore not entitled to benefit, is an anomaly that it is right to correct.

There are many who argue that when young people in the circumstances that I have described are not entitled to benefit—the hon. Member for Derby, South advanced this argument—they may be discouraged from taking examinations. It is said that they might seek employment instead or go for benefit. That would be a policy of short-term financial gain and I do not believe that many would sacrifice their longer-term enhanced employment prospects for that sort of immediate gain. It would be a foolish policy to which only a few would be attracted.

The regulations set out clearly the need for a comprehensive review of the benefit position for those aged between 16 and 19 years.

The regulations tidy up and improve the position. There is a series of relationships between grant, benefit, YTS and work, which we have not yet fully tackled. In view of the guaranteed place on a youth training scheme for two years, that is now available to everyone, and in view of the fact that they have a choice of work, education, or a youth training scheme—society has provided that range of options—I cannot see any reason to refuse one of those options. There is no need in general circumstances for people between the ages of 16 and 18 to receive benefit, because society had given them perfectly acceptable alternatives for income and training.

There will, of course, be circumstances in which teenagers find themselves in difficulties because they are severely disabled, orphaned or estranged from their parents — not to mention other circumstances. Those problems are taken into account in the regulations, and I am pleased to note that my hon. Friend the Minister is extending the benefit entitlement to young people whose parents cannot maintain them for reasons that are beyond their control.

I welcome the regulations and I hope that those to which I have referred are but the first step in a greater programme of reform.

6.22 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I feel that I am back in familiar social security territory, from which I have been recently diverted to other pastures. I have a warm glow of familiarity as I slot temporarily back into the old routine of debates on social security regulations.

It is also a pleasure to speak again after the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley). I notice that his views have not become much more progressive in my absence. At the end of his speech, he said that there was a need for rationalisation of the system as it applies to 16 to 19-year-olds in terms of the differing levels of income that they can derive from their status as students, schoolchildren or trainees. The hon. Gentleman was absolutely right about that, but I do not agree with his conclusions.

We must not give young people in this age group a positive financial incentive to stop education and training. There are anomalies in the present system that allow such a position to occur, and I have experienced them in my constituency case work. In the course of the comprehensive review that the hon. Gentleman rightly called for, that should be the principal guiding light in achieving a watertight system that makes sense. The piecemeal amendments to the system that are made in the regulations do not achieve that.

Statutory instrument No. 358 deals with school leavers. No doubt the Minister will put me right if I am wrong, but, as I understand it, the instrument will delay the entitlement of schoolleavers to supplementarry benefit in two ways. School leavers who return to school to take examinations will now be entitled to supplementary benefit only from the first Monday following the school holidays after the term in which they sit their examinations.

Mr. Major: That is not a disincentive.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Minister suggests that the delay is not a disincentive, but I say to him, candidly and bluntly, that the child benefit that is available to a pupil who is enlisted for an examination will be about £200 or £300 less than the supplementary benefit that can be claimed by a person as benefit during the same period. That is a clear example of how the present system acts as a disincentive.

The other change that the regulations make is that school leavers who leave school before the legal school-leaving age, despite being 16 years old, will now have to wait for a further term before getting benefit. That is a retrograde step, and I cannot for the life of me understand why it needs to be taken. There is no good reason why the school-leaving date should affect the right of 16-year-old Easter school leavers to obtain benefit from the first Monday after Easter Monday, whether or not they were 16 years old before the legal school-leaving date.

Mr. Major: I want to be clear about the hon. Gentleman's proposition. Does he, and does his party, propose that young people who are still studying for examinations should be entitled to benefit during the period in which they are still studying?

Mr. Kirkwood: I am saying that it is wholly wrong that they should benefit financially from stopping their studies. That is the point at issue, and that is why I believe that the

[Mr. Kirkwood]

comprehensive review that I mentioned earlier is necessary. The proposed delay of payment of benefit has severe financial consequences, as the SSAC report clearly shows. Although the total income of families on supplementary benefit may not be much different, the continuing dependence of a young person on the family during that period is a problem, and causes increasing homelessness. I am sure that the Minister recognises the difficulty of looking after such young people, and the aggravation that can be caused in the assessment unit during that period.

In any case, Easter is a difficult date. It is not a fixed calendar date: one has to know the date of the equinox in a given year, or however Easter is calculated. It is not a set date for the diary every year, unlike 1 April or 1 May. That complicates matters for claimants. I would have been happier, too, if the Minister had responded by telling us the costs in terms of benefit forgone and the numbers of claimants involved. Perhaps he will arrange to inform us of those figures when his hon. Friend replies. The costs and numbers are certainly important. Perhaps some of the figures have been released in earlier debates and are familiar—the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said that they were on the tip of his tongue. They should therefore not be difficult to produce.

Another important matter of concern is that, although the reduction in the figures may not be dramatic, the regulations will have an impact on the unemployment figures between now and September. That, too, should be considered.

I want to ask the Minister about what happens when a school leaver starts by registering for an exam. I understand that there has not been much consultation with the examination boards about schools, which usually automatically register students for examinations. If a pupil who has been thus registered thereafter leaves school, and the school does not have the time or resources to get round to deregistering that pupil's application for an examination, what will happen to his application for benefit? If the fact that the pupil has left school has not been recorded with the examination board, how will that affect the process of appeal for an application for supplementary benefit? There are administrative difficulties in this area and perhaps I have not gone into it in enough detail to appreciate what the Government's intention is. I therefore seek clarification about it.

I repeat that the Government do not have a coherent policy on income support for the 16 to 19-year-old group. Responsibility for it is still split between the Department of Education and Science, the DHSS and the Department of Employment. I agree that the DHSS should not be the principal support for young people in education—that does not make any sense—but the present position, in which local authorities are also involved, lacks co-ordination on student grants and seems to be forcing students to rely more heavily on benefits. At the same time, the DHSS is announcing its intention to move students from social security. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that chaos has resulted. Young people will suffer.

How many people apply for unemployment benefit while on the community programme? How much money is involved? The full extent rule, as it is known, was established to prevent well-paid, part-time workers choosing to use national insurance benefits to supplement their weekly income. Obviously, against that background, it was sensible to introduce the rule. In the past couple of years, the groups who are most likely to be affected are those who are unemployed and under the community programme and others in low-paid, part-time work.

These regulations seem to overrule the recent Court of Appeal decision. As a consequence, all those on CP programmes who are working part time will be subject to the full extent normal rule and will therefore not be able to get their community programme wage topped up with unemployment benefit. That will have an adverse financial impact on people who are married and have children. At the conjunction of the two existing rules, there is a ceiling of payments of £67 per person, plus the requirement that a person should be paid the proper rate for a job. The hon. Member for Derby, South referred to this matter. About 70 to 75 per cent. of places are part time. Denying benefit in this way, as we would if we passed these regulations, is a serious matter.

An income of £67 without an unemployment benefit addition compares extremely unfavourably with supplementary benefit, particularly for a family of two adults and two children under 11. They would get a minimum of £59·75, plus housing costs, while on supplementary benefit. Although families will be hardest hit, single claimants will also suffer. That will also have an effect—it may be a small effect—on unemployment figures. That charge is also regrettable.

Arguments have already been advanced about the supplementary benefit requirements and the resources amendment regulations. The ordinary board and lodging and homeless persons' rate are unchanged. The House should view with concern the fact that the rates for those living in ordinary board and lodgings have not been increased since April 1985. Prior to that date, the maximum board and lodging allowances were frozen. That has now been ruled invalid by the Court of Appeal. Meal allowances have also been frozen since the end of 1984. That has the effect of freezing the rates for those who are homeless. There has been a recent reduction in the rate of acceleration of inflation, but it is still going up rather than down and the allowances for those in board and lodgings and for the homeless take no account of increased costs. Since December 1984, the RPI has gone up 10 per cent.

Families classed as deliberately homeless are not eligible for the topping up of the board and lodging allowance paid by local authorities, with the result that they may be using some of their personal allowance and/or the allocation for meals to cover lodging costs. That, too, is serious. I hope that the Government will seek to remedy that defect at an early opportunity.

The changes relating to the additional requirements in residential care and nursing homes are mean and retrograde. What are claimants who suffer as a result of the changes expected to do? If they are unable to pay for special diets or additional baths, for example, are they simply to go without, have a totally unsuitable diet, or be forced to move to cheaper, perhaps less suitable, homes which offer less care?

There are some real problems. I accept that the Minister said that there were some beneficial changes which would increase the cost to the Exchequer, but, on balance, if figures were available they would clearly show that these

regulations will simply impose a further series of unkind cuts that will bring misery to many citizens who already are disadvantaged.

6.34 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I realise that the House wants to reach a rapid decision, but I wish to press the Minister on one or two points. The effect of the regulations on school leavers is mean and vindictive. I realise that the Government are desperate to massage unemployment figures down, but it is tragic that they should do so at the expense of that age group.

What is the position for those who were entered for CSE exams, had every intention of leaving at Easter, and now, because of the regulation changes, will ask to withdraw from the exams to qualify for benefit although they have already done the practical work for those exams? They are in a difficult position. What will happen to those who, having got jobs, leave school at Easter and have an agreement that their employers—unlike the Department of Health and Social Security—will be generous enough to let them have time off work to sit exams? If any young people lose their jobs through no fault of their own between now and the summer, will they be denied benefit because they sat the examinations? In the past, they were able to qualify for benefit because they had left school and started work. As I understand it, the fact that they have sat the exams will penalise them. That is another example of the Government's meanness and vindictiveness. The Minister should look carefully at the regulations with a view to the implications for next year.

The new GCSE examination will involve considerable continual assessment. In the circumstances, it is extremely difficult to decide at what point someone enters for an examination. Do we commit him to an examination from the first continual assessment or only at the end of the course, when a formal application with his name on it goes to the Department? I hope that the Minister can answer my questions. I stress that the regulations are mean. The Minister would do a lot better by taking them away and examining the major problem among young people who are denied education because of their poverty.

6.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Lyell): This has been an interesting debate, based on 10 technical sets of regulations. It has quite rightly concentrated not so much on technicalities as on the policy underlying them. It covers four matters that rightly interest the House. The first concerns those who leave school at Easter and the question whether they should move into the benefit system and be entitled to supplementary benefit. The second matter relates to residential care and nursing homes, about which some significant comments are to be made. The third matter concerns the community programme and whether those who are working in jobs under the community programme should also be entitled to unemployment benefit, something to which they were not entitled, of course, until the operation of what is known as the full extent normal rule was deemed not to apply in certain circumstances. That matter is still subject to appeal, and it may turn out to be reversed, but it is not acceptable to the Government in any event. Fourthly, we have dealt with a large number of detailed matters on pensions, although they have not raised questions in the House.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) asked an impressive list of questions. I say that with all proper respect. I was impressed by the number of questions that she managed to pack into her speech. I cannot answer every one, but I shall try to answer those which are of particular importance. My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) and the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) raised many interesting questions. I shall do my best to deal with at least some significant ones.

As my hon. Friend the Minister made clear, we know the increase in the number of people who have had the benefit of the provision in respect of residential care and nursing homes. One says with confidence and some little pride that the numbers have risen steeply. This has been a source of implied criticism from some areas because the provision comes from private homes. It has been suggested that perhaps these people ought not to be in these homes. The whole House would wish that those who are elderly and in need of residential care should have it.

We now know from the quarterly statistical inquiry of February 1986 that the total number of people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes who are being helped by supplementary benefit has increased to about 90,000 compared with about 42,000 in December 1984. The question was asked whether they were rightly there. That is being looked into under the auspices of the social policy research unit at the university of York. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security said, the unit found that the vast majority — 93 per cent. — were assessed as needing residential care at the time of admission to the home.

I draw to the attention of the House two refinements of that. The assessors were also asked to consider whether residents would have needed residential care if additional services had been available. They considered that if additional ordinary services such as sheltered housing or day care had been available—some people say that this might be a more sensible use for the money, and the Government will look at that with an open mind—even then 90 per cent. would have needed residential care. Even if more intensive services such as a full-time companion or night sitting services had been available, residential care would have been needed in 83 per cent. of cases. That is of some significance.

The results of the pilot studies need to be used carefully. They are being considered by the joint central and local government working party that is currently looking at the question of harmonisation of financial support for people in these residential care and nursing homes. They are relevant to the overall review of community care being carried out by Sir Roy Griffiths. They present a background to the questions asked by the hon. Member for Derby, South and by other hon. Members about additional requirements.

The broad and intelligent answer about additional requirements is that we expect things like baths, which can engender additional requirement payments, to be part of the proper service provided by the home for the ordinary fee. It is not a matter of depriving a resident of a residential care home of a bath. No care home worthy of its salt would say that if it did not get some extra money residents

[Mr. Nicholas Lyell]

would not get a bath. Bathing and other additional requirements should be part of the normal service, and that is the case in the overwhelming majority of homes.

The hon. Member for Derby, South asked some pertinent questions about the community programme change and how it affects supplementary benefit. I can assure the hon. Lady that the change does not apply to supplementary benefit. That benefit is paid and will continue to be paid to part-timers on the community programme where that is appropriate. The regulation does not imply that the community programme is full-time work. The question about family income supplement was also pertinent. That is payable to those who participate in the community programme and who are in full-time work, that is to say, 30 hours or more.

A formidable number of questions were asked and I do not have time to deal with them all. *[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish is happy to sit here listening to me answering. I say that with admiration and with respect to him, but I am not sure that doing that would enthuse every hon. Member to the same degree.

I deal now with some of the points raised about Easter leavers. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked a number of questions about the costing. I have a large number of detailed answers about that. I can tell him that some of the aspects give rise to small costs and others give rise to small savings. I have not been able to do an exact balance of the two, and in view of the time, I shall not reiterate exactly how they balance out. Initially, the changes retrieve the costs which resulted from the commissioner's decision in 1985.

The important point to make about Easter school leavers is that, under the previous Government and under this Government up to 1985 and the time of the commissioner's decision, the whole system worked perfectly well. It was not until the commissioner's decision arose and placed a temptation in the path of school leavers, which we do not think appropriate and I do not think that even the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) thinks is appropriate to tempt them into benefit, that they were liable to be tempted into benefit.

Mr. Frank Field: Given the number of social security Bills that we have had, why did not the Minister move primary legislation so that we could get all of this?

Mr. Lyell: The hon. Gentleman is always tempting about primary legislation. This is a large Bill.

Mr. Major: If the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) were Chief Whip, he would introduce primary legislation.

Mr. Lyell: My hon. Friend knows something about the ways of this House and can give good advice to the hon. Gentleman. It can best be done by regulation. *[Interruption.]* I have many questions to answer and I am trying to find the one which is of greatest interest to the House.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish asked about people in work whose employers let them take examinations. He asked, if they were to lose their jobs, would they be disqualified from benefit if they were taking an examination? If they were entered for exams when they left school they would not be entitled to benefit until the terminal date following the examination. I agree that at that stage in their lives young people may be in a variety of circumstances. We have endeavoured to establish rules that are as clear cut and consistent as possible, given that wide variety of circumstances. — *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see many hon. Members returning to the House. They are probably anxious to listen to the detail of the debate. One hon. Gentleman is clutching one of his hon. Friends.

This is part of a broad structure of social security. One understands the usual practice of Opposition Members to try to find out which parts of comprehensive changes reduce Government expenditure and which parts increase it. I have no hesitation in explaining the Government's position. Under this Government, expenditure on social security benefits generally has gone up, not in hundreds of thousands or in tens of millions but by no less than £11 billion in real terms. The House should bear that in mind. I think I am right in saying that that formidable and impressive increase not merely outstrips but outstrips by several times anything that was returned, happily, to the taxpayer in the Budget. I confidently commend the regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 16th March, be approved.

PENSIONS

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Class 1 Contributions—Contracted-out Percentages) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.

That the draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.

That the draft State Scheme Premiums (Actuarial Tables — Transitional Provisions) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Amendment and Uprating Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 16th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Major.]*

SOCIAL SECURITY

Motion made, and Question put,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Amendment Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 317), dated 3rd March 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 3rd March, be annulled.—*[Mrs. Beckett.]*

The House divided: Ayes 101, Noes 191.

Division No. 138 [8.47 pm

AYES

Adams, Allen (Paisley N)
Allen, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. (Tottenham)
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. (Dent'n & Red'sh)
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. (N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)
Callaghan, Jim (Heyw'd & M)
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander (Mont'y)
Cartwright, John
Clay, Robert
Cleland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. (Bristol S)
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank (Stockton North)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence

Davies, Ronald (Caerphilly)
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fields, T. (L'pool Broad Gn)
Fisher, Mark
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Hamilton, W. W. (Fife Central)
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. (C'nauld & Kilsyth)
Holland, Stuart (Vauxhall)
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George (Knowsley, N)
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Sean (Knowsley S)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence (Worsley)
Litherland, Robert
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. (E Kilbride)
Morris, Rt Hon A. (W'shawe)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Nellist, David
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond (Ogmore)
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.(Isl'ton S & F'bury)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Matthew
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert (South Ribble)
Atkinson, David (B'm'th E)
Baldry, Tony
Baliste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigge-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. (Brighton K'to'n)
Bowden, Gerald (Dulwich)
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton N)
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clark, Sir W. (Croydon S)
Clarke, Rt Hon K. (Rushcliffe)
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter (Angus East)
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George (Reigate)
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul (N'folk SW)
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas (Gr'th'm)
Howarth, Alan (Strat'd-on-A)
Howarth, Gerald (Cannock)
Hunt, David (Wirral W)
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward (Gainsbor'gh)
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter (Fareham)
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. (N'bury)
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal (B'grove)
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. (N'hampton S)
Morrison, Hon P. (Chester)
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John (Harrow W)
Page, Richard (Herts SW)
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark (N'port W)
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles (Pudsey)
Shaw, Sir Michael (Scarb')
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan (Eastwood)
Stewart, Andrew (Sherwood)
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald (Calder V)
Thompson, Patrick (N'ich N)
Thorne, Neil (Ilford S)
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. (B'heath)
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill (T'side N)
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. (Bexhill)
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen (Hertford)
Wells, Sir John (Maidstone)
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

Question accordingly negatived.

Adjournment (Easter and May Day)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 10th April, do adjourn until Wednesday 22nd April, and, at its rising on Friday 1st May, do adjourn until Tuesday 5th May, and the House shall not adjourn on Friday 10th April until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses. — *[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

7 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): I hope that the House will not agree to the Easter Adjournment until it has had time to consider the continuing problem of speech therapists.

As some hon. Members may recall, it is just a year since I spoke to the House about the problems of speech therapists, but little of significance has happened since then. It is not that there is a lack of interest; there is considerable interest. Indeed, there is interest in the House. In the near future, for example, an exhibition will be held in the Upper Waiting Lobby on how speech therapists tackle their important job and several early-day motions are on the Order Paper, including one tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle). It surprises me that hon. Members who are interested and want to help do not get together and table one large global early-day motion on the subject. There were also many early-day motions a year ago.

A year ago speech therapists were leaving the profession in large numbers although the need for them was increasing, and a year ago the Government, including the Leader of the House, were extremely sympathetic and willing to consider anything that might be done, but nobody did anything. Here we are a year later and the problem is still with us.

The Government will point out that in November 1986 speech therapists, reluctantly, accepted a 6 per cent. increase in pay, and Ministers will make reassuring noises that recruitment is going well and we have nothing to worry about. However, hon. Members will hear a different story in their constituencies. I know of one area not far from here where the vacancy rate is about 12 per cent. That is considerable among a small number of specialists.

We shall undoubtedly have a great deal of tea and sympathy, or perhaps just sympathy, in the next few days and probably from the Leader of the House. Nothing concentrates the mind so much as the prospect of an early general election, so Ministers will no doubt treat us to the same amount of sympathy as they offered in similar circumstances before the last general election. I fear that the results will also be the same.

This problem and injustice have been with us for too long. The pay of speech therapists is perhaps the meanest possible for a job that entails so much skill, energy and effort. Nearly nine out of 10 speech therapists earn between £5,964 and £9,720 a year. That is after many years of devoted work. Indeed, I know of one who has been engaged in her task for 14 years, yet that is all she earns.

The Government will say, "Why don't speech therapists take part in the pay review body?", but that is not the answer. Speech therapists are wholly distinct from the other members with whom they have been grouped in the pay review body. First, unlike the others, they are absolute experts in their sphere. They do not work under the supervision of doctors and their clients are not the subject of reference from doctors, so their profession stands in its own right. Secondly, they must be graduates, not only in the general sense of having a degree, but in a detailed, narrow section of medical knowledge. They are experts, so they should be compared with other graduates — for example, medical psychologists. Yet they are paid about one third less than those in other remedial professions.

It is hardly surprising that after a while they look around and say, "Is there another job I can do where I will be paid rather more?" As a result, they are leaving the profession and going into jobs which do not require their training and skill but which are better paid. They may be the material gainers, although they do not gain in other ways because most of them want to perform their vocation, but the country is the loser. Thousands of people who could be helped are no longer helped.

There are few more worthwhile vocations than that of speech therapist. It requires patience, skill and, above all, a desire to serve the community. Those virtues should not be taken for granted, especially in today's society. Still less should those who have them be driven from their profession. Speech therapists help people of all ages and, above all, children whose speech is imparied but who can be trained to speak so that they can live a normal life with the rest of us.

Recently it was estimated that 750,000 British children under 16 suffer from some form of speech or language disorder. Some years ago a national report recommended that the ratio of speech therapists to speech impaired children should be 1:150. Therefore, for 750,000 children whose speech is impaired, we should have 5,000 speech therapists, but the latest available figures show that we have precisely 1,200 to help them. Considering the pay, that is hardly surprising; what is surprising is that there are so many.

I do not wish to detain the House long as many other hon. Members have points to raise and have every right and duty to do so. With all-party support — Conservative Members as well as Labour Members may be sympathetic — and with our minds concentrated because of the imminent general election, this may be an opportune moment to see Ministers do their job properly and speech therapists receive the recognition that they deserve.

7.9 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I do not believe that we should adjourn for the Easter recess before we have a major debate on the dread subject of AIDS. I believe that that debate should take place either in Government or Opposition time and we should have a full day on the subject. I wish to concentrate my remarks on one particular aspect of the disease. Indeed, I have some fairly worrying news for the House.

Before I commence, I should like to emphasise—I do not believe it can be done too often — the potentially catastrophic nature of a disease that was completely unknown only a few years ago. I have seen some expert estimates that suggest that nearly all homosexuals who are promiscuous in their relationships will be dead within 10 or 15 years. If that is true, it is something to consider. I have also read that three quarters of drug addicts who use needles will also die. It is the explosion of the disease as a result of heterosexual promiscuity which will have a devastating effect on our society.

A few weeks ago, I received answers to written questions that I had put down to the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Security which revealed that there was a discrepancy in the recording of the figures of those who die from AIDS. I have now received a letter which reveals a disturbing state of affairs in that respect and, if the House will bear with me, I will spend a few minutes quoting from it.

The letter came to me in a roundabout way. It was written by Dr. Anthony Pinching who is a senior lecturer and consultant in clinical immunology at the department of immunology at St. Mary's medical school. He is a person of great distinction in this subject and probably one of the leading experts in the study of AIDS. Lord Kilmarnock had written to Dr. Pinching on the subject of AIDS and had sent a certain amount of parliamentary material that included my parliamentary questions. Dr. Pinching replied to Lord Kilmarnock and was courteous enough to send me a copy of the letter. I have since obtained his permission to quote from it. The letter states:

"In relation to the discrepancies between the information from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and that information provided by the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre, the reason is very straightforward. There has been considerable difficulty with confidentiality in respect to patients who have died from AIDS, as occurs equally when they are living. One particular problem that has led to breaches of confidentiality is the fact that the death certificate is a public document and a number of newspapers, as well as other individuals, have obtained access to confidential information about people who have died from AIDS by this means."

I am sure that we all condemn this scaremongering and the exposure that some papers go in for with regard for AIDS However, as Dr. Pinching has said, death certificates are public property.

The letter continues:

"As a result many clinicians, including myself and members of my unit, do not put the word AIDS or anything directly relating to it on the death certificate. We try to put sufficient information on to identify the secondary disorder from which the person died without identifying the underlying disorder. In most instances we identify that further information can be made available to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys through the subsequent confidential inquiry system which the OPCS operates. Nevertheless, the most important means of ensuring that accurate figures about the numbers of cases obtained rests on the voluntary reporting system"—

I wish to emphasise that—

"directly to the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre by clinicians. This has worked extremely effectively up to now and I believe that the CDSC figures are reliable, subject to the inevitable delays involved in reporting cases from very much over-stretched clinical units, of which you know the details. When I last discussed this matter with the epidemiologists at the CDSC it was apparent that they had not obtained information about any individuals with AIDS from the OPCS records which they check, that they had not previously been aware of during a patient's life through the voluntary reporting system. I think this indicates the effectiveness of the voluntary surveillance system."

I believe that this is an important subject and that is why I have quoted at such length. Dr. Pinching concludes:

"It is not surprising that members of the two Houses"—

he is referring to Parliament—

"are not aware of these details of clinical practice, but I believe that it is important that members of the Houses should be aware of the reasons underlying the fact that death certificates do not necessarily incorporate AIDS for the reasons given above. You will appreciate the extreme sensitivity of this matter and the need to protect the relatives and the close associates of our patients from information disseminated as a result of the public nature of the death certificate as a document."

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am sure that my hon. Friend will be interested to know that Dr. Tony Pinching is one of three distinguished persons currently advising the Social Services Select Committee, of which I am a member, during its inquiry into the critical subject of AIDS.

Sir Dudley Smith: If my hon. Friend was present at the beginning of my speech he will be aware that I paid tribute to Dr. Pinching as an expert and said that he was a man of the utmost probity and expertise. I hope that the Committee will consider the subject that I raise tonight, as it is most important.

I believe that we must have an accurate, effective system of monitoring this disease and its ultimate consequences. We must know how many people have the disease at any one time and we must also know, with absolute accuracy, how many people die from the disease. It should be mandatory for doctors to record AIDS as the main reason for death on death certificates. There can be no fudging of the issue because of the lamentably distressing nature of the disease for relatives. That may sound very hard-hearted, but I believe that the situation in the country decrees that we must have accurate information. We shall need that information as we get further and further into the mire of this terrible disease.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): There will be many haemophiliacs who will contract AIDS through no fault of their own. They will receive no compensation and will be put in an extremely difficult position. There will be a great problem if every death certificate carries acquired immune deficiency syndrome as the reason for death.

Sir Dudley Smith: I agree with the hon. Lady; indeed, she is anticipating my remarks.

Secrecy works both ways. There are those who are genuinely dying from other causes, and, unfortunately, after they are dead, their relatives may discover that the finger of suspicion is pointing at the deceased. That is already happening in some walks of life when people say, "We know he really died of AIDS." That innuendo comes across many times, and is it fair for those families who have lost someone who contracted the disease innocently—for example through infected blood when treated for haemophilia, or as a result of a blood transfusion—not to have that fact recorded on the death certificate? The death certificate should state that the person had died from AIDS innocently contracted from a blood transfusion. It is important that that is recorded; otherwise people will say, "Ah, that is just a cover-up. He said he got AIDS from a blood transfusion, but it was because of his promiscuous way of life."

Dr. Pinching has been extremely helpful in supplying this information and I am most grateful to him. He appears to be satisfied with the current procedure and believes that it is reliable. I am not satisfied. I believe that society decrees, however sensitive the subject, that we must do rather better than this.

I believe that Government action is required. Indeed, it will be seen to be needed if this disease takes hold like a prairie fire as some clinicians have forecast. I have talked to Dr. Pinching and he said that he is handicapped by a

[Sir Dudley Smith]

lack of resources and a lack of staff in tackling the disease. At the moment a ward round can last all day because of the many patients who have AIDS. Because of the nature of the work there is often no time to compile the records without delay, and to pass them on so that they can be filed and checked.

Dr. Pinching praises the Government for the energy of their campaign and for advertising the dangers of this dread disease, but he believes that more time should be spent on other areas, and I agree.

I know of two people in public life about whom strong allegations were made that they died of AIDS. In one case I strongly suspect that that was true, but it was not recorded publicly. He had been in ailing health for some time. In the other case I am sure that the allegation was untrue. There was press speculation about both cases with headlines such as "X or Y—did he die of AIDS?" That was scurrilous in the case of the person who died from a disease other than AIDS. I urge Home Office and DHSS Ministers to consider the problem seriously.

I add a final word on this grim subject. We must keep up the pressure on all the various aspects, as my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is doing in his Select Committee. We must keep up the pressure in the Chamber. It is vital to continue to stress to the nation the seriousness of the disease.

It is ludicrous that, following advertising and television programmes on the subject, programmes follow immediately—with the usual diet from television—flaunting promiscuity in plays and in so-called comedy shows. Leaving aside moral considerations, that approach stands logic on its head. Something should be done about it.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I agree with my hon. Friend about advertising and television programmes. Has he any suggestions about how such advertising can be improved? It has been suggested to me that more effective and simple would be to use the slogan, "Promiscuity means death."

Sir Dudley Smith: I agree, provided that the public understands what promiscuity means. One must be fairly simplistic. That aspect needs to be stressed. It is not beyond the Department's wit to achieve the desired effect. We have taken the first step and we must now take the second.

I hope that Ministers will take into account the death certificate problem. It is essential because delays are now occurring and there is a likelihood of some discrepancy. We must have accurate figures because the problem will not go away in the next six months or year. It will be with us for a long time until a cure is found. In the circumstances, the British public is entitled to know the exact numbers.

7.23 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am tempted to contribute to the discussion on the important subject of AIDS. I hope that the House of Commons will take on board the responsibility for those haemophiliacs who have been infected by being given contaminated blood.

The House of Commons should not adjourn until it has discussed the urgent problem of what is happening in British Rail Engineering Ltd. workshops in my constituency. On Tuesday this week I visited BREL and saw its highly modernised and efficient shops. I was shocked by the atmosphere among the workers, who are in considerable doubt and worried about the future, yet they work in what should be the pride of our engineering units.

The House should consider the difficulties caused by Government policies. Earlier this week British Rail and BREL were split into two separate companies. If one accepts—which I do not—that the Government's plan was to make the workshops more efficient, one must realise that in Crewe we can say that even by the Government's criteria we have carried out the sort of plan that they proposed for a useful future. So why are we still at risk?

By August this year, nearly 1,000 jobs will be lost. Already 400 men have gone and another 600 redundancies will be made by the spring of next year. Most of the jobs will be lost by August. In August 1988 apprentices will be leaving their training school, but unless the unions make voluntary agreements it is doubtful whether those young men will be found jobs, even though they have undertaken long and exhaustive training.

The changes in the workshops are remarkable. I was surprised to see how many changes had been made in the short time since my last visit. The problem is not a shortage of investment. The work force at Crewe has diminished from 4,000 to 3,000. Workshops have been closed and a great deal of land has been offered for sale. The machine shop has been altered and investment has been made in high-powered and up-to-date machinery. I am talking not about small-scale retooling, but about major moves from traditional engineering patterns to highly specialised, robot machines capable of producing with ease almost any equipment required by any section of industry, not just the railway industry.

Last year, £4·4 million was invested and in the new build area £1·3 million spent on re-equipping the shops. A total of £3·5 million has been spent this year on the machine shop. As a result, the work force has not only been slimmed down, made efficient and tightly organised, but it operates high-powered, high-quality tools. Nevertheless, in the middle of the year we are suddenly told that British Rail is to change its working pattern.

The bulk of activity in the Crewe workshops has always been repair work. It is capable of new build, but it has always been able to meet a steady flow of high-quality repairs. In the last year it was the only British Rail workshop to be given a work allocation of 216 locomotives and to achieve that total. Despite that, because of changes in work patterns, there is to be an acceleration of redundancies and repair work will not be forthcoming.

The Government's line, which they push with energy, if not with conviction, is that British Rail now has more efficient engines which require less servicing. The reality is that the movement of locomotives from Crewe to other workshops is not because they do not require maintenance and servicing, but because of a management decision to put the work elsewhere.

Some of the things that have happened are difficult to explain. There is, for example, a highly efficient store system at Crewe, which is to be relocated elsewhere at considerable cost to British Rail Engineering Ltd. The reality is that, compared with other works, and certainly with any other works in this country, British Rail

Engineering Ltd. at Crewe has a highly efficient and well-equipped workshop capable of competing with any workshop anywhere. What it must have, however, is equal freedom not only to tender but to get a fair crack at the existing work. That is tremendously important. If, for political reasons, decisions are made that will steer away from Crewe the amount of work that is necessary to make the unit viable, there will be very deep anger indeed.

I cannot emphasise enough how ironic it is that, on the 150th anniversary of the Grand Junction Railway, in a town that was built for railways, a town that is synonymous with railways, we are facing a situation in which the whole work force is destabilised, not because it is not capable of doing the work for which it is trained, not because it does not have modern equipment or well trained operatives, but because political decisions are being taken by British Rail management which are having a direct and damaging effect upon the work force.

I could take the House in very considerable detail through lists of the allocations of locomotives and repairs in which Crewe has been involved over the last two years, but I hope that the House will accept from me that the real problem has not been any slackening in the high quality of the work or any inability to change work practices. Indeed, the members of the BREL work force have been so flexible in the way that they have operated that they have accepted considerable changes. The rate of change in the way that they operate in Crewe has been far greater than that in comparable manufacturing units elsewhere.

Why, then, are they faced with this very considerable challenge? Why are so many men and women in my constituency deeply worried about their future? It is really not sensible for the Government to tell them that they need not worry because they will be able to compete for work against private firms and if need be, against firms abroad. They know that in many instances the British Railways Board is positively pushing for orders to go not just to other firms but to other firms outside the United Kingdom. They find this difficult to accept when they are sitting there, after the very considerable investment of taxpayers' money, wondering what is to happen to them.

It is frightening for a constituency that has always faced the problems of unemployment by seeking to find new jobs, new technology and new ways of operating to be told that it does not matter what people have done to protect themselves, they are as expendable as any other work force. This is totally unacceptable and I find their anger and despair wholly justified.

I ask the Minister tonight to carry to the Secretary of State for Transport a very simple but very heartfelt message. It is that this country will not stand aside and watch that pool of expertise dissipated in misery, unhappiness and despair. That is what will happen if British Rail workshops are put under even greater pressure to run down for purely political reasons. They have seen the beginnings of the Serpel report being put into operation, they know how much they are at risk and their anger is very real indeed.

I ask the Minister, when he talks to his colleagues at the Department of Transport, to emphasise that it is no use talking about what might happen in the future and offering the suggestion that when the Channel tunnel comes, if we are lucky we might be able to get some of the new build that will arise from that project. Men who are faced now with order books that have been reduced by over one third know that they are going to have to find work this year, next year and the year after. They cannot be bamboozled into waiting for some project which may or may not carry with it a number of jobs in the future.

I know that the Minister understands that. I know that he will make sure that his colleagues understand it, because the House of Commons will return to this subject again and again until those men are given back their confidence in the future of industrialised operations.

7.34 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has raised a matter which is obviously very important for her constituency. I want to do the same, and I believe that, if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) will also deal with this matter. I refer to the need for a debate on the National Health Service, in particular so that Leicestershire Members can raise the situation in their county.

I was first elected to the House in February 1974, at almost exactly the time when the area health authorities were being founded. Leicestershire district health authority is almost exactly the same as the previous Leicestershire area health authority. At that stage, Leicestershire area health authority was one of the most poorly funded in the country. It was at 75 per cent. of the average National Health Service funding across the country. As a result of the pressure exerted by Leicester city and county Members of both parties, and also by successive Ministers in successive Governments, both Labour and Conservative, the percentage has been raised to the present figure of 96 per cent. But that figure is still below the average funding of NHS authorities in this country. This is a matter that continues to be of great concern to the Leicestershire and Leicester city Members of all parties, and the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) specifically said that he wanted to be associated with my remarks tonight, because I discussed them with him earlier.

I remember going with hon. Members of both the Labour and Conservative parties, including my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, to see Mrs. Barbara Castle when she was Secretary of State for Social Services in 1974 to plead that we should continue to build the new Leicester district general hospital, which at that stage it was thought might be cancelled. In fact it was not cancelled; indeed, it was opened by a member of the royal family last year. So that has come to fruition and is very welcome.

Nevertheless, the Leicestershire health authority is left with some very serious problems, and the problem that I want to raise with my right hon. Friend tonight — I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough has asked to see the Minister of Health with a deputation and we expect that meeting to take place very shortly— is that of the funding of wage settlements.

This has been a particular problem for the Health Service. In 1984-85, in Leicestershire, we had a shortfall in funding pay settlements of £600,000; in 1985-86 it was £1 million; and in 1986-87 it was £950,000. If we were to have in the forthcoming financial year a 1 per cent. unfunded increase in pay settlements, it would cost the Leicestershire health authority £1·2 million. This would be a very serious matter indeed. Already, very unpalatable decisions are

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having to be looked at because the Government are not properly funding the settlements that have been made at the national level.

I must say to my hon. Friend—and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough will revert to the position in more detail if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that the Leicestershire Members will expect those settlements to be properly funded. We do not expect anything unreasonable or excessive. We expect, indeed demand, that our authority proceeds under the resource allocation working party formula to 100 per cent. funding, which is the intention by 1994, although I hope that it will be earlier than that.

Furthermore, if the RAWP formula is to be in any way eased to help London Members, to which I do not object because I know that they have problems, we in Leicestershire insist that it should not be to our disadvantage. We remain underfunded and this is the whole basis of the RAWP formula. I want to leave the point very firmly in my right hon. Friend's thinking that we in Leicestershire expect to have a proper part of the National Health Service.

I want to raise another matter that is also of great importance to my constituents. I am referring to the need for a debate, which I believe the Leader of the House intends to concede shortly after Easter, on agriculture, the environment and the countryside. This is of great importance in Leicestershire and also, I am sure, in my right hon. Friend's county of Shropshire. If anything is certain, it is the necessity for a statement of Government policy about where we are going, following the major changes in the Common Market as a result of the problem of surpluses. I have read *Farming UK*, produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and other Departments of Government quite recently. It reads very nicely, looks very nice, and so on, but it leaves us with substantial and serious problems that need to be addressed immediately.

The "question which dare not speak its name" almost, although tangentially referred to in the document, is that of how we are to escape the fact that farmers, being human, will expect to defend their family incomes. If the price mechanism is used, as the document regularly says, farmers will expect to grow more or produce more in order to obtain the same amount of income from a product that has been cut in price. The other problem is that if, instead, we choose to put things into intervention, as has also happened, we get the horrendous and obscene expenses that so outrage the public. A total of £66 million is the current cost of storage alone of products in intervention; products which have a notional value of about £1,200 million. Many of them have a nil value. In fact, we are giving some of them away, perfectly reasonably. Some are sold to Russia for virtually nothing. So they have no value.

These problems of how we are to alter the balance in the countryside between farming and the environment must be properly discussed by the House, because it is essential for the maintenance of rural life that we get this right. British agriculture is immensely productive and efficient. It deserves defence from this Government, and it will get it from its party supporters on the Government Benches, at any rate.

As regards the environment, which is also of great importance to hon. Members on the Government Benches, some very stupid remarks were made at the time that the White Papers were being published, suggesting that the new circular was evolving a developer's charter. That was absolute nonsense. It was never intended to be that, and will not be that, but it is incumbent upon Ministers, in the debate that we shall have, to make it clear that, while it is perfectly acceptable that disused barns and so on should be used to set up new rural industries—something that will have strong support on the Government Benches—there is no question of mass building all over the countryside.

This is well understood by the building industry. When the circular first came out, the director of the House Builders Federation was quoted in *The Times* as describing it as just a minor and technical change. I can say that if he had thought it a major and substantial change, of benefit to his members, he would certainly have said so. I say that with some authority, because from 1971 to 1973 I was director of the federation, and I can imagine what my reaction would have been had I been in that position now.

In a parliamentary answer to me on 19 February, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, said:

"435 mecu have been set aside for use by the Commission to provide extra support for the beef sector as necessary." —[*Official Report*, 19 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 784.]

Yet the magazine *Farming News* last Friday quoted the EEC Farm Commissioner as having told the president of the National Farmers Union:

"no provision has been made in this year's EEC budget to cover the cost of increased cow slaughterings."

They cannot both be right. Either the Minister was right, or the Farm Commissioner was right. We need this cleared up quickly. We have new quotas coming up. The beef industry could be seriously affected by culled dairy cows. We must have it clear whether all these millions of ecu, roughly £308 million, will be available to help the beef industry if necessary. I hope for a clear undertaking on that from my right hon. Friend.

7.44 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): It is some time since I took part in this kind of debate, and I have been intrigued by the remarks of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and other remarks from both sides of the House. A prominent feature of the debate has been the repeated requests for the Leader of the House to persuade the Government to take certain actions before the House adjourns for the Easter recess.

While we in the Opposition are on good ground in asking the Government to intervene, perhaps I can say with no great hostility that, although we are in an intense pre-election atmosphere, it is somewhat strange to hear right hon. and hon. Gentlemen on the Government Benches asking the Government to intervene on a whole range of matters when this Government consistently advocate a policy of non-intervention, of withdrawing from the market. What the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton wants is for the market to be cooked for farmers, manipulated so that farmers can maintain their income. We hear not a word about miners or engineers maintaining their income. I have nothing against farmers, but for them the instrument of government has to be used.

As it happens, with no collusion, the subject that the hon. Member raised in a tangential way—the Health

Service—I want to raise on behalf of my constituency, but I must tell the Leader of the House that we in Scotland have no love for the Prime Minister or her economic policies and certainly no love for the view that the Health Service should be supplied — because it would be a negation of the word "service"—by the market.

One of the most nauseating remarks of the right hon. Lady — it will be deep now in the recesses of her memory—was that the good Samaritan would not have managed to get help for his neighbour if he had had no money. When disasters happen, when there are fires, the Prime Minister goes to see the victims — quite rightly, that is the role of the Prime Minister — but she never suggests to the unfortunate victims or their families that they would not have help unless they had money.

The people in my constituency are quite clear about this. For a long time now we have asked that the acute bed shortage in Fife be rectified. In 1983, the Fife health board carried out an option appraisal exercise — a rather sophisticated term — with the assistance of the health economic research unit at Aberdeen university. Five options were suggested. In June 1984, the health board decided to proceed with option C, which placed the emphasis for development on the West Fife district general hospital, particularly phase 2, in Dunfermline.

In the late autumn of 1985, the decision in favour of option C was thrown into confusion by information thought to emanate from the building division of the Common Services Agency in Scotland, which suggested that a more extensive development could take place on the site of the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy. I canvassed this matter in an Adjournment debate on 31 October 1986. In November 1986, the policy and resources committee of the Fife health board was presented with papers which went over the existing evaluations and contained a recommendation from the officials of the board in favour of another option, option D, which placed the emphasis of development on the Victoria site at Kirkcaldy.

The policy and resources committee did not decide the matter, but passed it to the board. On 25 February 1987, at a properly convened meeting, the Fife health board decided, by 10 votes to six, that the preferred option should be option C. I apologise to the Leader of the House as I am using a shorthand form to describe what happened, and I am not giving details of the number of beds involved as I presume he will be contacting his hon. and right hon. Friends at the Scottish Office. Subsequently, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and I have had meetings with Scottish Office Ministers, and especially Lord Glenarthur, who is the Minister responsible for these matters in Scotland. He and his officials accept the board's decision in favour of option C.

Not unnaturally, there are certain rumblings of discontent when a decision is made after some delay. Unfortunately for the people of Fife, there might be moves within the board to reverse this decision. I think that that would be wrong because it would not be best for the people of Fife, especially after the long delay that we have experienced. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to clarify whether the option appraisal for option C is declared and fully accepted policy. I feel that it is fully accepted by the Scottish Office. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to clarify, having submitted to them an approval in principle for phase 2 of the Dunfermline and West Fife development, whether the Scottish Office will accept phase 2 without delay and not ask the health board for detailed development and approval in principle of the whole of option C.

This is a democratic decision. It is most important that the acute bed shortage in Fife is dealt with apace. I do not want to enter into the argument on population distribution or how we in Fife resolve our differences. The board decided by a substantial majority of those who were present, and those who were absent should not be allowed to frustrate this decision that has been accepted by the Scottish office. We in Scotland recognise the great value of what has been done for us by the Health Service, and especially the hospital service. The Government must recognise that the situation, particularly in Fife, can be rectified only by Government action, not by the private sector.

7.53 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I assure the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) that I will not ask for taxpayers' money. I wish to raise a more general and profound point.

I do not believe that this House should adjourn for the Easter recess until we have debated the moral condition of England today, Parliament's relationship with the Church of England, and what part both Church and state can play in public morals. We have to ask ourselves whether it should be the Government's responsibility to give a moral lead, or can we leave this entirely to the Church, particularly at a time when the Church does not appear to be giving strong moral leadership? The question, of course, is not new. There was the famous occasion when the late Earl of Stockton was asked about public morals and he gave the somewhat dusty answer that one should consult the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The archbishop gave an interview to Bernard Levin in *The Times* last Monday. Reading the archbishop's answers, one is struck by the fact that he is a very nice man indeed, but his answers were hardly clarion calls to the nation. If the apostles had adopted that tone, the early church would never have got off the ground. It is appropriate that we should consider this subject during Lent and while we all look forward to Easter. In the good old days, the monarch or Parliament would call on the nation to fast from time to time, and perhaps it is a pity that that custom no longer continues, for we need to take stock of ourselves and some of our problems.

The paradox is that most people in this country — leaving aside for a moment those who are unemployed or less fortunate—have never had it so good materially, yet there is some unease that all is not well in other aspects of our lives. I shall give some examples of where the Government and the church are not giving a clear moral lead. The subject of AIDS was raised earlier this evening. The Government issue solemn warnings about the dangers of AIDS, but no mention is made in their advertisements of marriage, only the euphemistic word "partners", and there is so much emphasis on contraceptives that it must have a crude and brutalising effect on innocent young people.

The Church of England, apart from a pamphlet by the recently retired Bishop of Birmingham, has maintained a deafening silence on the moral problem of AIDS. It does not say that AIDS concerns mainly homosexuals and drug takers. The Church does not condemn homosexuality and very seldom mentions the subject of drugs. In so far as

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AIDS affects heterosexual conduct, the church does not appear to say that Christianity demands chastity before marriage and fidelity thereafter. Perhaps that is too hard a saying for a generation brought up in the cult of self-indulgence.

Or take the subject of crime and violence, which worries us so much, as we heard in yesterday's debate. The Government rightly are giving much thought to a larger and better police force, sterner penalties, more prisons, the excellent crimewatch scheme, and so on. But I am amazed that, as most crime is committed by young—sometimes very young — people, no mention is made of the responsibilities of parents for bringing up their children properly. Surely this is a paramount factor in people's behaviour. The Government should stress that there must be more respect for parents and for authority in general or society will disintegrate. This applies to so much crime, including crimes of violence such as football hooliganism, mugging, rioting and the appalling act of rape, which is becoming distressingly more frequent.

The Church, meanwhile, is absolutely silent on these evils. I know, because for the last few years I have attended the General Synod regularly. It prefers to deal with matters further afield. Even after the dreadful riot when a policeman was barbarously murdered — we read recently about the trial—I did not hear a single protest from a churchman.

A much less important matter, but one of concern for those of us who love our country, and one typical of our problems today, is the cleanliness and tidiness of our towns and cities. Some beauty spots are in an appalling mess because of litter. England used to ba a far cleaner and tidier country than many on the Continent, yet unfortunately the reverse is true today. A country which is proud of itself keeps itself in good order, just as a smart regiment does. Here again the answer must surely be in part the responsibility of parents. A vast state scheme costing much taxpayers' money is not necessary.

It is the conduct of the individual that matters. If individuals behave well, we have a good state. Parents must tell little Johnny not to throw his toffee papers on the street. Much worse is the vandalism that we suffer. There is within 25 yards of my house a telephone box which is used frequently, but often the telephone is smashed. That is regrettable.

We see the most appalling graffiti on walls, inside trains, at bus stops and in similar places. That was unknown before the war, when there was much more poverty and hardship. The Government, as well as the Church and teachers, have a responsibility to ensure that children are brought up to respect their neighbours and not to make places dirty and untidy.

The Government are trying to free us from many of the restrictions that the state has placed upon us over the years. They are trying to make people help themselves rather than look to the state for assistance. That is right, but it means that we must all behave more responsibly, show concern for others and exercise good manners and courtesy. I am glad that the Government are encouraging acts of charity.

When we come to the family, which is really what I am talking about, the Church could do much more to support that great institution on which our civilisation depends. Divorce is worse in England than in almost any other country. There are far too many one-parent families. The Church hardly ever mentions that serious and lamentable position. We are not helped of course by the popular press or some television programmes which do not lift the moral tone of the nation. Rather they seem to pander to the lowest traits in human nature.

To pull ourselves together we need leadership at every level — from the Church, the bishops and the clergy; from Government and Ministers; and from leaders in every walk of life but particularly in the teaching profession, which, after parents, has the greatest responsibility for young people.

I try never to end a speech on a gloomy note. We still have a great deal to be thankful for. I speak as someone who has lived abroad for some time and who has always travelled a great deal. This island country has a long and marvellous history, which is amazing in some ways as it is such a small island. I hope that the teaching of history will be done properly in our schools and not in a modern and absurd fashion.

Despite all the faults I have outlined, we still have a quality of life which is better than the quality of life almost anywhere else. So many people who come here say how much they like our way of life. Apart from being a very old nation, we are civilised, tolerant and kind. We must try to keep it that way. When it seems that most people will be better off than ever before, it would be a pity to spoil it all by bad and selfish personal conduct. Conditions present a challenge to the Government but, above all, an opportunity to the Church of England.

8.6 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am surprised to find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) on his main point, as well as on others of which he may be aware. Although I doubt whether the Leader of the House will concede his request before Easter, I share his view that it would be opportune to have a general debate on the relationship of moral and ethical issues to civic and governmental issues. I served for a short time in the General Synod before the hon. Gentleman and I share his view that there is often a Christian answer for individuals and for problems where the state cannot provide an answer. We may disagree sometimes on the remedies, but we would look to the same place to find the ultimate and unchanging truths.

Of the six speakers so far, the hon. Gentleman, like four others, alluded to Health Service matters. We have had only one contribution, that of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), unrelated to the Health Service. Her speech was about employment. So the debate so far has been principally about the two major preoccupations of the public, employment and health, if opinion polls are correct in the information they interpret.

I wish to raise with the Leader of the House two matters which are specific and urgent and on which I hope the Government will act before we agree to rise for Easter, because they are both matters that cannot properly wait. They relate to two crises facing two key professions in inner London. One concerns basic aspects of the teaching profession, and the second the nursing profession.

I accept that the first is not principally a governmental responsibility, because my concern involves a shortage of primary school teachers in the Inner London education authority area. The Government, however, have some

responsibility, and I should like the Leader of the House to be alert and to stress to his colleagues the seriousness of the problem and a suggested way forward.

The matter came to my attention dramatically just after Christmas when a church primary school, the parish school of the cathedral church of St. Saviours and St. Mary Overie, near to Southwark cathedral, had its reception class closed for a month. The pupils had to stay at home for a month because there was no teacher. With the redeployment of the teaching staff it has been open since, but it again faces the risk of closure after Easter for an indefinite period. A county primary school in my constituency, Albion school in Rotherhithe, has now joined that risk category. It too faces the prospect of pupils being sent home after Easter, not because of industrial disputes, but because there are no teachers. This is not because these two schools have a particular problem. The problem is much more general and it affects the county and Church sectors.

I should like to give the House the statistics to show how urgent the problem is, and I shall then suggest a way forward. I shall quote from a report from the divisional office at Southwark in relation to the county sector first:

"By the annual summer holiday each year, the Division's school teacher vacancies have usually all been filled; but in September 1986, there were 25 unfilled vacancies in primary schools . . . By Christmas 1986, the number of unfilled vacancies was down to about 5 but the new crop of resignations, confinements, and long term absences raised the total number of vacancies in January to 48"—

this is in one borough in London—

"with 29 covered on an acceptable basis. From Easter 1987, the Division will have a further 35 long-term vacancies from Scale 1 upwards."

The next part of the quotation relates to the secondary sector. It says:

"The problems of covering vacancies are not as acute in the secondary sector but the cover position for sickness is not good. Currently 9 long term vacancies have adequate cover but the position will worsen after Easter with approximately 20 long term vacancies from Scale upwards."

The Anglican diocesan schools do not have as bad a problem, although there is a problem within the Anglican diocese, which extends beyond the borough of Southwark through south London into Surrey. I quote from a letter dated 19 March from the principal adviser at the diocesan board of education. It says:

"I have written to all headteachers in the Diocese asking them to predict how many vacancies there will be in Diocesan schools in September 1987. So far, I have received 27 replies out of a possible 110 . . . The replies received so far indicate a likelihood of 17 vacancies at Scale in these 27 schools. If this sample is representative we can project a total of 58 vacancies throughout the Diocese. These 27 schools also indicate 50 vacancies at Scale 2."

You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the House will be aware that under the Education Act 1944 there is an entitlement to education. Parents ask me, "How is it that our right to have our children educated is not being fulfilled?" Under various sections of the Act, the Secretary of State has power to look into these matters. I urgently ask that we do not have a term after Easter in which schools have closed classes because there are no teachers.

As always, the problems are complex, but one of the problems is common to teachers and to nurses, with whom I wish next to deal. One of the desperate problems is the shortage of housing for rent in inner London at a price that anybody coming from outside inner London without an existing fixed home can afford.

There is clearly a nursing crisis in inner London, and you, Sir, will be aware that in the last few days newspapers have carried headlines which dramatically illustrate the problem. A headline in *The Independent* of 16 March read:

"NHS losing 1,000 nurses a year to private sector."

A headline in today's *Daily Mail* read:

"Patients 'at risk' in nurse crisis. Up to one in four hospital jobs unfilled."

A headline in yesterday's *London Daily News* read:

"Share-a-bed scheme for Bart's patients. London nurses crisis."

The Royal College of Nursing was so alarmed by these problems that at the end of last year it set up an inquiry into how dramatic and crucial the position was. It reported yesterday, and the Leader of the House will, I believe, be aware, that the Government are about to receive the recommendations of the pay review body. Nurses' pay is a crucial factor, as well as that of the lack of accommodation. It is sometimes thought that, because the population of inner London has declined, the problem is not acute, but I know that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that, because of the high daytime influx of population, and because of tourists, postgraduate specialties, and other national specialties, the demand on the Health Service is enormous, even if the local resident population has been reduced.

One problem is that the cumulative drain in nursing has now reached an unprecedented level and the Royal College of Nursing's conclusion is that there is a critical shortage of trained nurses in London. The British Medical Association shares that view; it said in a letter to me received today:

"All the signs show that, for purely demographic reasons, the problem is going to get worse. We anticipate that there will not be enough people of a certain age going into a nursing career."

Information from the report of the RCN has generally been made available to the public, but I shall give the House the specific figures as confirmed yesterday and today by the principal nursing officers in each of the following inner London authorities. They have all bar one supplied information to my office. The Riverside health authority was 657 nurses short of establishment. At the end of February, Paddington and North Kensington was 287 nurses short. At the end of February, the figure in Wandsworth was 220. In Hampstead it was 220, in Bloomsbury about 220, in the City of London and Hackney health authority the figure was 365, in Newham 255, in Tower Hamlets 211, in West Lambeth 189 and in the two health authorities which cover my constituency, Camberwell was 239 nurses short and Lewisham and North Southwark was 319 nurses short. That makes a total of about 3,050 nurses missing which the Health Service establishment fixed as being necessary for basic health care in London. If it is not a crisis when at least in some hospitals one quarter of the jobs are not being done by nurses, I do not know what is.

The reasons for the shortage are these. First, there are demographic reasons for the number of people of the right age group not coming into the profession. Secondly, there is no doubt that nursing pay is a major disincentive. The average pay for a staff nurse who is qualified after five years of service is about £7,000 per annum. That figure cannot allow such a person to work in inner London. That is also a disincentive to men coming into the profession. In any event, a family cannot be supported on a nurse's wage. Thirdly, there are the stretched working conditions.

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One fifth of the work force are student nurses and they complain that they are often left alone in charge of wards in London.

Fourthly — this is a crucial factor with this being London and national housing week — there is the problem of house prices in London. Buying property in London is effectively impossible for somebody wishing to nurse there. District health authorities have been selling off accommodation. The Government must intervene to make sure that accommodation can be provided for staff who want to live in hospital accommodation.

Fifthly, there is the cost of travel into London, which is a disincentive. Sixthly, violence in London is a disincentive to people who are taking a job which involves going home, for example, at 9.30 pm, which is the typical time for people to go off a late shift in hospitals. It is not that they are normally physically victims of, for example, grievous bodily harm, but there are aspects of vandalism, personal aggravation and personal interference.

Seventhly, staff are being tempted away by the higher salaries that are paid in the private sector and overseas, and Australia, America and Saudi Arabia have been recruiting in London. The free market economy means that nurses will respond to its attractions.

Eighthly, agencies cannot provide all the nurses that the district health authorities require, especially in the specialty sectors of nursing.

I want to sum up the crisis by quoting from a letter that was written to the authorities at the Lewisham and North Southwark health authority by somebody who was considering coming to nurse at Guy's hospital in my constituency. It was written recently. I shall leave out the name of the recipient and the author, to keep their confidentiality.

The letter said:

"I am sorry to say that I will not be entering the Royal School of Nursing training at the Thomas Guy and Lewisham school of nursing in May 1987. After giving it a lot of thought I feel that I cannot live for three years with so very little money, and due to staff shortages have to deal with situations at the time I cannot cope with. With the state of the National Health Service as it is at the moment, I do not feel that I will have the dedication to work so terribly hard and have no money to do anything outside of nursing. I am sorry I have not let you know earlier but it has taken a lot of thought and talking to a lot of trained nurses. I don't want to waste your time or mine by giving up half way through the course. I am sure you have many people to fill my place. Thank you for your help."

Little does she know that there are not many people to fill her place.

London has the most horrendous nursing crisis. The Government can intervene and they have a key opportunity to do so in the pay awards that they are about to determine for the Royal College of Nursing and for other professional bodies in the NHS when the pay review bodies report. If the Leader of the House can ensure that before the House adjourns for Easter the Royal College of Nursing and other nursing and medical professions—the Health Service professionals in the review board categories —can be assured that they will receive what the review bodies recommend, even though some people might say that that is an advantage for the Government in a possible run-up to an election, the nursing and medical professions will, above all, be grateful. At least then we shall be able to get people back into our hospitals to look after our patients and to perform a proper duty for our Health Service.

8.20 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has done a great deal of research in the cases that he has presented to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House this evening, and I am sure that he will receive a full and sympathetic response. I follow him in only one matter, which is of urgent importance to my constituency and should be debated before the House goes into recess for Easter, and that concerns education.

We have a terrible problem in Macclesfield in that Cheshire county council, which is Labour controlled with Liberal and Social Democratic support, is seeking to force a sixth form college upon Macclesfield and to impose a system of 11-to-16 education in secondary schools against the wishes of a majority of parents, a considerable number of teachers and the education advisory committee in Macclesfield.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will call the matter in at the request of myself and all the Conservative county councillors representing Macclesfield and will consider the matter urgently because the uncertainty currently faced by parents and young people in Macclesfield is extremely damaging and we want to ensure that in future the excellent reputation of our 11-to-18 schools can be maintained. I was prompted to make those remarks in passing by the reference to education made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey.

There are two matters which are of great importance and should be considered by the House before we rise at the end of next week. Hon. Members will have heard and welcomed the recent statements that the problems of Japanese restrictive and uncompetitive trading practices will be tackled by the members of the EC. That is long overdue. Many Conservative Members have been highlighting for several years the unacceptable manner in which our domestic industries have suffered at the hands of the Japanese, whose support for their national companies has been—I use the phrase intentionally—blatantly ruthless in complete disregard of the spirit, if not the letter, of international trading agreements.

We should expect such support from the Japanese Government for their industries and would hope that the same spirit of self-interest was exhibited by our Governments in the past, but one thing that we in this House cannot accept and should not tolerate is an open invitation to Japan by the British Government, or a Department of Government, to tender for a contract which gives them access to yet another area of industrial production in which to date they have made little impression.

I refer to the example of the purchase by Her Majesty's Stationery Office of a new printing machine for the manufacture of the flexible laminated United Kingdom EEC passport. It is bad enough having to change our passport, but to have that new passport produced in Britain on a Japanese machine compounds my anger and annoyance.

In Stanley Press Equipment, a company in my constituency, the United Kingdom has a supplier of similar European equipment which is used throughout the

world and which has a reputation for quality and reliability. Yet in its attempt to gain the contract to supply HMSO with such a European piece of equipment, which could have done the job as well as the UNO machine manufactured by Sumitomo of Japan, at a more competitive price, Stanley Press Equipment met an unhelpful attitude on behalf of the Civil Service—a Civil Service which appears deaf to our manufacturing expertise, which seems to be mesmerised by the Japanese salesmen and determined further to undermine our manufacturing base. The Japanese Government need hardly worry about defending their own industry when our own civil servants seem so keen on fulfilling that role on their behalf.

Therefore, I urge the Government, even at this late stage, to look again at the matter. The devious trading practices of Japan justify such action. If the Government are serious in redressing the outrageous trade imbalance between Japan and Western Europe, such action is essential.

Having said that, I want to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury, who has done his utmost to help me. He saw me at short notice and has sought to investigate the matter on my behalf. But until I approached him, which was fairly late in the day because I was not approached until fairly late in this sad saga, my hon. Friend was unaware of what was being done in his name. I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will look at the matter again.

I am deeply concerned about our manufacturing base and I know that hon. Members would not expect me to make a speech without a brief mention of the textile industry. It was with great concern that I received a letter from the president of Berisfords Ltd., the ribbon people of Congleton, in the constituency so ably represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton). That letter drew to my attention the steady reduction in the consumption of yarn for textile manufacturing in the United Kingdom and the continued growth in imports of textiles and clothing.

There has been a reduction in the use of yarn in United Kingdom textile mills and factories. In 1973 we were using approximately 900,000 tonnes of yarn and by the end of 1986 that figure was scarcely above 500,000 tonnes. That shows the dramatic reduction in Britain's manufacturing capacity. That shows why there has been such a dramatic increase in imports of textiles and clothing from overseas. In 1972 Britain imported approximately 250,000 tonnes of textiles and clothing, and by the end of 1986 the amount had risen to approximately 700,000 tonnes.

A traditional but important manufacturing sector in Britain has been decimated, in the main by unfair competition. It is no longer a sunset industry. It is an industry which has invested, rationalised and sought to respond to the market.

Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will take on board from a member of his own party the message that there are those who believe that there is a vital need for a substantial manufacturing base in Britain if we are to remain not only a major economic power, but a major political power in the world.

That leads me on to say that the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union has brought about the most encouraging development in East-West relations, and the strongest possibility of a lasting secure peace, since the Russian revolution in 1917. I warmly welcome her dramatic achievement, which I am sure will be welcomed by everyone in western Europe.

I also welcome what my right hon. Friend has done for trade. She announced this afternoon that, while she was in Moscow, agreements were signed for orders worth approximately £400 million, a major tranche of an annual trading arrangement which could amount to £2·5 billion. That is the sort of leadership that our industry wants and, I hope, will receive from the Government during the remaining months of this Parliament, and when they are re-elected in the forthcoming general election.

I am all the more happy about what happened in Moscow because Rieter Scragg, a company in my constituency, agreed with the Soviet authorities an order totalling £10·5 million for its world-famous draw-texturing machinery. It will begin delivering the machinery to the Soviet Union in the early part of 1988. The order will secure employment at that famous company, which has been part of the Macclesfield scene for many years—and which, I hope, proves to my right hon. Friend that the textile industry in all its forms has a major part to play. Here it is, producing a high technology, sophisticated machine that can sell well on the world market. It needs the climate and the leadership that the Prime Minister has shown during her dramatic trip can be provided.

I come to a matter of considerable concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House — that is, the predicament of war widows. Eighty right hon. and hon. Members have expressed their concern by adding their names to an early-day motion that I tabled earlier in the Session calling upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer to use the current Finance Bill to redress the discrimination suffered in the United Kingdom; particularly by pre-1973 war widows. That most deserving group have made great sacrifices throughout their lives. It does not reflect well on the House, on successive Governments or on the people of this country, whatever their politics, if we permit their plight to continue. We should have expressed in financial terms the gratitude that we owe to this aging and diminishing group whose husbands, many years ago, gave their lives in our defence and to guarantee our freedom.

There is a strong argument for improving the assistance available to all war widows to make it at least as generous as that received by their European counterparts. For instance, the basic war widow's pension in the Netherlands is nearly triple that received by our war widows. In Germany, a country that we defeated, war widows not only receive three times as much as they do in this country, but a holiday every two years with all expenses paid.

I want to be reasonable. To expect such major improvements all at once is perhaps too much to ask and too optimistic. However, the pre-1973 war widows' case is irrefutable. Those brave women receive only about half the financial assistance that is made available to their post-1973 counterparts in this country. When I last made a detailed analysis of the figures, it was apparent that the post-1973 widow of a private soldier would receive a combined pension of more than £5,000. Her pre-1973 counterpart would have received just half that amount —about £2,500. Those pensions may now have been increased a little by the cost of living, but the huge discrepancy—and, what is more, the injustice—remains.

The time is long overdue for the Government to do what has not yet been done by either a Labour or a Conservative Government, and to ensure that the special

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

Ministry of Defence pension, which accounts for this doubling of the later widow's income, is made available to all British war widows. I pay particular tribute to Mrs. Iris Strange and to the British War Widows and Associates which has done so much in seeking to improve the lot of its members and of those who are not even members. I hope that my right hon. Friend agrees that we must enable those brave, patient, courageous women to end their years in dignity and the financial security to which their sacrifices entitle them, and that the House will be prepared to act accordingly.

I suspect that deep down, whatever our politics, we all feel that the war widows have a genuine case. That case cannot be left unanswered any longer. I know that my right hon. Friend will listen sympathetically to my plea and will take a message to the Treasury and the MOD so that the injustice can be rectified in the next Finance Bill.

8.36 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): When I worked for Granada Television, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) lodged a complaint about the behaviour of Liz Howell, a reporter, and myself, a researcher, and about an item that we had featured. He was hysterical, and his complaint was dismissed: no one took it seriously.

The hon. Gentleman has been a little hysterical tonight. Perhaps he has been gripped by election fever. He is not the only one; I am told that the Lobby is saying that the Prime Minister will call an election on Tuesday for 7 May. Perhaps the Leader of the House will tell us about that, as it relates to his duties. It may be that the cause of the election is the Prime Minister's trip to Russia.

I confess that I did not hear her statement today, because rather than participate in high-flown rhetoric that belongs in the clouds I went with some young people to Randall Cremer primary school in Hackney to watch a play presented by the Theatre of Thedelma, and very enjoyable it was.

However, I suggest that the House should not adjourn until the Secretary of State for the Environment has had a chance to come to the Dispatch Box and to tell us why he is about to issue a directive to the London borough of Hackney to force the borough to sell land in Laburnum street—which, incidentally, is only about 100 yards from the school that I visited this afternoon.

It is odd that I can even come here and take the time of all these great and prescient persons to talk about a directive to sell 3·31 acres of housing land in London. But that is the bizarre nature of what is happening to Government. The Government were elected on the basis that they would take government off the backs of the people and local authorities, yet they have passed legislation that gives them the authority to issue directives to local authorities to sell land. I do not know how that squares with their fundamental philosophy.

This is not any old bit of land. Although it is not a very large site, it is the largest site in Hackney's current capital housing programme. If Hackney is forced by diktat from Whitehall to sell it off, three things will happen. First, the Secretary of State for the Environment will wreck Hackney's housing programme. Secondly—he may not worry too much about this, but others do—it will become impossible for the council to carry out its election pledges. Thirdly, Hackney will be unable to carry out its statutory responsibilities under the Housing Acts. I ask the Leader of the House to speak to the Secretary of State and to tell us what is happening.

I used to work as a civil servant in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, which spawned that hideous giant octopus, the Department of the Environment, with its terrible architecture designed by the Ministry of Public Building and Works. When I worked at the Ministry, Ministers — whether Labour or Conservative—considered that their task was to nurture, encourage and help local authorities to develop, and to enable them to get on with their own policies.

How is it that in a few short years we can have a Secretary of State for the Environment who sees it as his task to wreck, destroy and impede local authorities in their basic functions? The notion that a Secretary of State for the Environment can destroy a local authority's housing problem by directing the authority to sell off precious land is so extraordinary as to demonstrate clearly how the political scene has changed and how some sort of authoritarianism has crept into the very Government who claim that their philosophy is based on 18th-century Liberalism.

I must ask the Leader of the House whether he can explain the curious conduct of the Secretary of State for the Environment over the past couple of years. He has broken so many laws, bullied so many individuals and made so many offers to councils that they have not been able to refuse that he now appears as a sort of godfather in a Government who are run by the Mafia. The Secretary of State's personal conduct is extraordinary. He has contempt for the rule of law and behaves in an authoritarian fashion on rate capping. He is saying now to a great London borough that he will stop it carrying out its housing policy and force it to sell off its land. How can this happen? Surely he should be invited to tell us before we rise for the Easter recess or for May day how the issue has arisen. Perhaps the Government's next action will be to block May day.

There are 700 homeless families in Hackney. Well, most of them are living in dreadful hotel accommodation in the City of Westminster. Many of the hotels would be closed if all the relevant regulations were applied. In addition, there are no fewer than 15,000 on Hackney's housing waiting list. Many of them come to my surgery on Fridays and Saturdays and break down in tears, but what is the point of crying if the Secretary of State for the Environment is to stop Hackney building new houses? The standard response is to say that there is a fair number of empty houses in Hackney. The answer is that if every empty house was occupied tomorrow, there would be only a minor dent in the problem of 15,000 being on the waiting list.

There are 8,000 on the transfer list, and these people do not want to transfer from one dump to another. They want to occupy modern, well-built, low-rise housing, which the professionals describe as living in the vernacular style. The majority in Hackney are condemned to live in high-rise flats. Who encouraged or practically forced Hackney and other London boroughs to build high-rise flats? The answer is the Ministry of Housing and later the Department of the Environment. How can I speak with some assurance on that? The answer is that I worked in the Department at the time when Conservative and Labour Ministers were forcing London boroughs to erect hideous

buildings so as to provide housing at a faster rate. The blame and responsibility lies with the Department, and when a sensible, sane council says that it will build low-rise housing that is fit for families, the Secretary of State for the Environment tells it that it must sell off its land. In other words, he is saying that Hackney is not to have it.

If Hackney is not to have the land, who is? I shall tell the Leader of the House and the Secretary of State for the Environment who will have it. The land will go to private builders who will build houses on it costing £100,000 plus. That is the sort of price that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was talking about. We in Hackney do not want a land of yuppies at every cul de sac in the borough. We do not want yoghurt-eating yuppies. We do not want more middle-class people. They can stay in Islington, if that is where they wish to squat.

It is outrageous that the Secretary of State for the Environment should be saying to Hackney, "I shall force you to sell off this land to private builders," when the poorest people in the poorest borough in the country cannot get decent housing and when 23,000 of them are after it. I ask the Leader of the House to explain how his right hon. Friend can say to Hackney, "You must sell off the land to private developers." This approach is open to every conceivable form of political chicanery. How was Laburnum street picked upon? There are millions of acres throughout the country on which building could take place, yet 3 Laburnum street, Hackney, has been picked upon. What sort of computer picked out these 3·31 acres and said, "This is the sort of land that private developers want."? How did it come about that there was a huge press release that showed eight little blocks of land? Where does all this come from? This small piece of land has been selected because someone has said that he wants it and because someone else knows that he wants it. There is no other way in which 3 Laburnum street can find itself so prominently in the political spectrum.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is concerning himself with a piddling 3·31 acres. It is so important to private developers that he is intent on forcing the borough to sell it. It is a damnable disgrace that Hackney is being forced to sell the land to speculative developers so that they can sell the houses that they build upon it to those who currently live far away in Reigate and Surrey.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): What about Devon?

Mr. Sedgemore: I come from Devon and I know that there is much rural poverty in that county. Devon people are not wealthy. They cannot be compared with those who live in Reigate, for example. I invite the right hon. Gentleman to visit Exmouth, where I was born, and Exeter, where I live. After he has visited the area he will not make superficial comparisons between those who live in the leafy suburban glades of Surrey and the honest-to-God fishermen and rural workers in Devon. To do so is a disgrace and an insult.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I know that the Leader of the House cannot help my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) on this matter, but as he has mentioned Devon, Reigate, the leafy lanes of Surrey generally, Islington and Hackney, I ask him whether in all these places there are the various addresses of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best)?

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend tempts me but I know that you would rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I followed him down that tortuous path and leafy lane.

The people of Hackney are so upset about what has happened, including those who live in the Haggerton area where the land is, that an 80-page document has been submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment. The chairman of the planning committee, Councillor Bryaley Heaven, and the chairman of the general housing committee, Peter Chowney, have said that they are prepared to fight the issue in the courts if it is necessary to do so, but surely a London borough should not have to go to the courts to ensure that it is enabled to carry out its housing programme. It should be able to rely on Ministers and Parliament generally to behave responsibly. It should be able to rely on Ministers to uphold the rule of law and not to sell off its land to their friends. It should not have to be confronted with the scandal of Ministers selling off land to their supporters as opposed to the deprived and poor who live in Hackney. I hope that Hackney will get the support of the Leader of the House in its wish to bring the Secretary of State for the Environment to the Government Dispatch Box to explain this outrageous behaviour.

My God, has the Secretary of State for the Environment nothing else worth while considering than one small piece of land in Hackney? Is there nothing else that he should be doing? Does Whitehall know so much about Britain that it can select a tiny dot on a huge map and say, "This is what concerns us."? Is a tiny blue dot the only thing that concerns it?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: It happens in Macclesfield.

Mr. Sedgemore: The hon. Gentleman may be happy about that, and people may be better off in Cheshire than in Hackney. I know that they are better off in Cheshire because I lived in the county when I worked for Granada Television. I know how well off the hon. Gentleman's constituency is.

Mr. Winterton: Macclesfield?

Mr. Sedgemore: Yes. I know that the people of Macclesfield are better off than those who live in Hackney.

Mr. Winterton: They are not.

Mr. Sedgemore: We are now having an argument, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Macclesfield interjecting from a sedentary position while I am on my feet. The hon. Gentleman protests that people in Macclesfield are poorer than those in Hackney.

All I can say is that I rely on the statistics of the Department of the Environment. They produce their Z-indices of poverty. Those show that Hackney is one of the poorest boroughs in the whole of Great Britain. It contains 300,000 people, and is, on average, poorer than Toxteth, which is a smaller area in Liverpool. We all know the problems of Toxteth. I cannot believe that the hon. Member for Macclesfield will tell me that his constituents are poorer than those of Hackney or Toxteth. That does not make sense.

I hope that the hon. Member for Macclesfield will give me his support, and I hope for an explanation of this

[Mr. Sedgemore]

bizarre, curious, extraordinary and arbitrary authoritarian activity on the part of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

8.51 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I shall not take up the arguments of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). He put across his point of view forcefully and no doubt has impressed the House.

My reason for suggesting that we should not rise for the Easter recess is the problem upon which my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) touched, and concerns the funding of the Leicestershire health authority. My hon. Friend dealt admirably and clearly with the problems that are faced by that authority, and I can do no more than add to, or perhaps embellish to a minor degree, what he said.

It is rare for me to suggest that the House should not adjourn for the Easter recess. After this long term of Parliament, lasting 13 weeks, hon. Members from either side of the House would suggest that only for a pressing or urgent matter, because carrying on through Easter is an unusual course for us to take. Nevertheless, that is what I want, unless the problem of the underfunding of Leicestershire health authority is resolved at an early date.

I speak for every hon. Member from Leicestershire. Certainly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton said—I am delighted to see him in his place—it is necessary for us to place on record the anguish that is felt on both sides of the House by hon. Members who represent constituencies in Leicestershire about the underfunding of the Leicestershire health authority.

I intend to be brief. I wrote to my hon. Friend Minister for Health on 23 March, asking whether he would see a deputation of colleague as a matter of urgency. It was a personal letter, accompanied by a great many papers, but it has not yet been acknowledged, let alone answered. No doubt the *Hansard* writers up above, with their usual diligence, will make an exact copy of what I am about to say, and I shall send it to the Minister in the post tomorrow.

Over the years, there have been a number of debates on the underfunding of Trent region and the Leicestershire health authority within Trent. All those debates featured the singular anomaly that has resulted in Leicestershire health authority being at the bottom of the national average for funding. As my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton said, 15 years ago that underfunding was 25 per cent. below the national average. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security said in the House a few days ago, ten years ago, Leicestershire health authority was 20 per cent. below what is now called the RAWP target. Today, Leicestershire is still well below the RAWP target, by a factor of 4 per cent.

I have repeatedly said all this without effect. At times one feels inclined to adopt a similar attitude to that of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch. Perhaps one should make more fuss and threaten violence to one's hon. Friends in the Department of Health and Social Security, in order to get something done. During the same period, London, southern and home county health authorities have been consistently 20 or 25 per cent. above RAWP allocations. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said, on 25 March, that she hoped that the Leicestershire health authority would be funded in full for the first time ever by 1994.

I accept my hon. Friend's word, but, at the same time, I want to say to the House, and through the House to her, and through her to our hon. Friend the Minister for Health, that that process must be accelerated, because by 1994 is not good enough. In my view, there will be physical violence in the Leicestershire area unless the timetable is speeded up considerably and a further £1 million is allocated forthwith.

Not surprisingly, there have been many letters and meetings in Leicestershire and in London on this subject. In a letter to me on 18 March, the chairman of the Leicestershire health authority, Mr. George Farnham, said:

"As you are aware the Authority is likely to overspend its budget by £1 million this year, mainly due to its success in treating more patients within existing facilities. The Government's initiative to reduce waiting lists with a special allocation of £217,000 will help us to treat even more patients in some specialties in 1987-88 and this is appreciated.

However, the Authority has been forced to review its remaining plans for 1987-88 because the resources allocated by the Regional Health Authority are less than expected and well short of actual needs. It is true that the Trent Regional Health Authority received an additional £55·3 million (6·3 per cent.) and Leicestershire received its fair share of that sum. Of the additional revenue allocation of £9·5 million almost £8 million is needed for the effects of inflation and this leaves only £1·5 million for development of services."

The health authority chairman specified what makes the Leicestershire health authority a special case in the second half of the paragraph. He said:

"This is a resource increase of approximately 1 per cent. but, due to the various demographic changes in population, the Authority's resource needs have increased at the same pace and it therefore remains at 96 per cent. of its (RAWP) resource target. Members of the Authority have expressed serious doubt on the Government's will to implement RAWP in the face of pressure from London authorities and are seeking a firm commitment to equalise resources within a given timescale."

The authority's financial situation has caused great concern in Leicestershire. An urgent meeting of the health authority took place on 11 March. The chairman, Mr. George Farnham, the director of finance, and other chief officers tried to convey to the members of the authority the need to economise, to pay their way, by trimming programmes to the tune of £1 million. My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton referred to this. The meeting that took place on 11 March at the Leicestershire health authority headquarters was stormy. One might even say that it was riotous. The result was a resolution throwing out plans to make the £1 million economy measure. It was thought to be grossly unjust to sick and invalid people in Leicestershire.

The resolution concluded:

"this Authority fears that the full implementation of the Director of Finance's report"—

that is the one that was thrown out—

"would result in a reduction of patient services."

The resolution noted:

"funding commensurate with our resident population and RAWP target would provide us with an additional £5 million to enable us to continue to provide adequate patient services. The further saving of £1 million spread over all Units is unacceptable and General Managers should attempt to find an alternative radical solution."

After the resolution was passed, the chairman of the health authority, Mr. George Farnham, came to see us. The key to the trouble in Leicestershire — the

misunderstanding in the Department of Health and Social Security is not deliberate — is the rapidly increasing population. The Leicestershire health authority has a great success story to tell. It does not stumble from one crisis to another. It has made some remarkable progress in patient services.

I shall place on record a couple of statistics, in the hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will read them tomorrow morning. In 1978-79, Leicestershire health authority treated 72,000 in-patients, and in 1985-86 that number went up to 93,000. The number of out-patients went up from 395,000 to 554,000, and the number of day cases went up from 9,300 to 22,500. The waiting list is a key to success. It was slashed from 9,354 in 1978-79 to 7,779 in 1985-86, the latest figure that I have available. At the same time, the number of doctors in the Leicestershire health authority has increased from 556 to 617, and the number of nurses and midwives has increased from 5,989 to 6,220. A key to a successful and efficient service is the fact that the number of administrative and clerical staff remained static in the same period, thus serving many more patients; that is, 1,438 in 1978 and 1,470 in 1985. The number of ancillary staff has been reduced from 2,931 to 2,690. A decreased number of ancillary staff are serving a far larger number of patients. The number of ambulance staff — an important arm of any Health Service — has gone up slightly.

The fact that in the seven years from 1978 to 1985 the number of doctors and nurses has increased and waiting lists have been reduced, the fact that the number of patients has increased by 40 per cent., and the fact that, at the same time, the number of clerical staff has been decreased, demonstrate the great success story of which the Leicestershire health authority should be proud.

I now wish to refer briefly to the cash flow troubles that Leicestershire health authority is having. In Leicestershire we have a community health council. It is worth quoting to the House what the secretary of that council said about the critical situation in which the council saw Leicestershire health authority. In a letter dated 24 March, Mr. Brian Marshall, the secretary of the council, said:

"As you are so well aware, the Leicestershire Health Authority is currently funded only to 96 per cent. of the recommended RAWP allocation and in consequence is in the unenviable position of having to defer schemes currently in its programme with the danger of even more dire consequences having to be considered.

It is, in the opinion of this Community Health Council, greatly to the credit of the Authority and its Chairman that it has rigorously taken action to prevent a decline in its level of services. In many ways it can be said that the Leicestershire Health Authority is a victim of its own success as its record of increased services"—

all hon. Members aim for such services—

"as both in-patients and out-patients so clearly shows."

The final letter from which I want to quote in respect of this tragic matter for Leicestershire is about the funding of a new bone marrow transplant unit in Leicester. It cost £180,000 and was funded entirely by charity. There have been letters of appreciation in the press about the people who have been generous and kind enough to donate the £180,000 for this desperately needed unit.

The letter from which I shall quote is from the co-ordinator of the Leicester bone marrow transplant project, Mr. Jack Townsend, and is dated 19 March. The cost is about £180,000 for the building and equipping of the units and that the project has already raised £160,000. He says:

"The Leukaemia Research Fund agreed to put the money up-front because they felt (i) the need was urgent (ii) the Leicester Royal Infirmary has a reputation for the excellence of its staff and the teaching faculty at Leicester University warranted support. As a result of which these two units should be open and available to the first patients in May of this year.

In all my dealings I have found nothing but cooperation from the Leicester Health Authority and the Regional Health Authority. They have been splendid and one of the turning points in getting the Leukaemia Research Fund to agreeing to put the money up front was the fact that they agreed to provide revenue finance for the running of these units with effect from April of this year. It would now appear that insufficient funds will be forthcoming from central sources to enable them to carry out fully their commitment. This is in spite of the fact that, and I quote from an extract from a White Paper (No. Cm. 56 Vol. 1 & 2 on Public Expenditure) 'The NHS is committed to take full advantage of advances in medical technology and to remedy "known shortfalls" in certain surgical areas. This will mean more operations for Bone Marrow Transplants.'"

Because of the lack of revenue funding, this project, the capital cost of which was paid for by voluntary donations, will run at half or little more than half its capacity. That is a disgrace, and for that reason alone I make no apology for detaining the House on what I regard as a very urgent matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Five hon. Members wish to speak before the first winding-up speech at about 9.40 pm. I hope that hon. Members will be exceedingly brief so that all can have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

9.9 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I shall be as brief as I possibly can, because I recognise what you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) because my area is also part of the Trent regional health authority and I am conscious of the time that it will take under RAWP to catch up with the more prosperous health authorities.

On revenue funding, my area has a number of voluntary schemes that cannot go ahead purely and simply because they would be useless as insufficient revenue funding is coming through. I can inform my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) that a Bill has just come out of Committee that will make the three and a third acres of land to which he referred fade into insignificance. The Secretary of State for the Environment is moving more powers into central Government and away from the local authorities, especially in relation to land.

The way in which our Parliament works is wonderful because it gives an opportunity in Adjournment debates to raise many issues which concerns hon. Members. We are now debating whether we should adjourn, or prevent the adjournment of the House, until such issues have been discussed. Sometimes I wonder how popular it would be if the Leader of the House stood at the Dispatch Box and agreed with us. It would not be very popular with hon. Members, staff or wives.

However, this debate gives me the chance to raise two cases that have arisen because of the problem of mining subsidence. There is no doubt that the mining industry will expand and that the Government will find the mistakes that they have made regarding cuts in the industry. This

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week the manufacturers of heavy duty mining machinery have brought to our attention the fact that 54,000 jobs depend upon that industry directly or indirectly.

We should discuss the Waddilove report before the Easter recess. No matter how careful people are and how careful are the plans that are made, mining subsidence will inevitably occur. We have been waiting for the Waddilove report for a long time. Several cynics in my area—perhaps they are not cynical—have said that that report has not come to the Floor of the House because moves are afoot to privatise the mining industry.

As the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the House knows, in the past mine owners did not pay out subsidence money. If subsidence occurred, one had to grin and bear it. Subsidence payments were allowed only when nationalisation came in, and we should never forget that.

I am not knocking British Coal on the issue of subsidence, far from it. I have known instances in the past when after repairs had taken place the finished product was much better that the original ever was. I have always received good co-operation from what used to be the National Coal Board, now British Coal, regarding subsidence problems. Some of the problems arise not only from British Coal's interpretation of the subsidence, but from the Coal-Mining (Subsidence) Act 1957 itself.

I shall refer to two completely different cases to try to explain exactly what I am talking about. First I refer to Mr. Williams of 198, New road, Staincross, whose home suffered severe damage. In fact, it split into three sections leading to severe weather penetration. The board has undertaken its statutory obligations and, to a certain extent, repaired the damage that occurred. However, Mr. Williams' house has suffered a sever tilt. That raises another question because compensation for tilt is different.

British Coal's own valuers valued the house, undamaged, at £22,000. However, because of the damage that has occurred, it is now valued at £17,000, a difference of £5,000. For some curious reason the board has offered not £5,000, but £2,000. I believe that British Coal is interpreting the Act in that way because it believes that the new extensions that were built on to the old part of the house were not properly keyed in, and that therefore some of the responsibility rests with the owner. Alternatively, because the building is old, it could believe that the subsidence would not have been so severe if the building had been newer. That is either a ridiculous interpretation of the agreement, or a ridiculous agreement.

The argument against the board's case is that, only 20 yd away, bungalows have been pulled down to the ground and rebuilt. That shows the severity of the subsidence in the area. No matter what the age of the building, or the interpretation of the agreement, the fact remains that the damage would not have occurred if the subsidence had not occurred.

The second case, which is wholly different, concerns Eric Lodge of Royds farm, Royds lane, Elsecar, a dairy farmer. Initially he ran a mixed farm, but following opencast mining, the land became fit only for grass and cows. Subsidence severely affected the farm in 1980, 1981 and 1982 and the water supply was severely disrupted. At the end of 1981 the feeding area was depressed, so he tried self-feeding, but that was unsuccessful. The buildings collapsed, killing two cows, and three more cows were electrocuted because subsidence trapped cables. Clearly, he had to sell the herd until the Coal Board repaired the damage.

The Coal Board built a new milking parlour, repaired the buildings where it could and erected new buildings. The trouble was that milk quotas were introduced and the base year for the registration for quotas coincided with the time when Mr. Lodge started his herd again. Therefore, a herd only part the size of his original herd was available to qualify for milk quotas. All the investment that my constituent incurred on the encouragement of the Government is lost, unless something can be done.

I thank the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) and the Under-Secretary of State for Energy the hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. D. Hunt) for all the help that they have given me and my constituent with this problem. They have done their best and gone as far as they can. The stumbling block has been the interpretation of the subsidence legislation.

British Coal says that it is not responsible for the loss of milk quota and that it is a consequential loss. My interpretation is that it is a direct loss. Compensation from British Coal would provide for the purchase of extra milk quotas which the Minister of State says is available.

If the Waddilove report had been discussed previously we might have got over this problem. We need to debate that report in the House. I shall pursue these cases with British Coal, the problems in the second case are greater, so together with my constituent, I hope to meet the deputy chairman of British Coal. It may be my inadequacy in putting the case that is the problem and my constituent may be able to put it better directly to the deputy chairman and prove that he is suffering, not from a consequential loss, but from a direct loss. Three families depend for their living on the success of this argument. For that reason, we must ensure that this problem does not recur. It is essential to debate the Waddilove report on the Floor of the House.

9.18 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Wide-ranging debates to persuade my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to postpone the Adjournment of the House invariably throw up extraordinarily interesting material. I should like to begin by echoing one or two of the reasons which have been given why the Easter Adjournment should be postponed.

The comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on war widows will have drawn wide support from both sides of the House. I was delighted to sign his early-day motion, not least because my grandfather died in the first world war and my grandmother was a war widow.

The remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) about the funding of the Leicester health authority will certainly find an echo in my constituency because a significant number of my constituents have used the hospital and health facilities in Leicestershire, although they live just over the border in Northamptonshire. I can certainly speak of the high reputation which the hospital at Leicester and the health authority have beyond the county boundaries of Leicestershire.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton about the paramount necessity for this House to discuss the implications of the proposals that my right

hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment have introduced concerning planning in the countryside. Those proposals are of great importance to my constituency. The commercial and industrial boom that is taking place is so great that there is not the slightest doubt that, by the end of this decade, there will be a substantial shortage of the necessary people in my constituency. That is likely to mean that thousands of people will move to the east Northamptonshire and Corby area. Some of that new population will find their housing in new accommodation that will be built in the town of Corby, but others will wish to live in the villages of Rutland, in east Northamptonshire in my constituency, and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman).

As a result of this boom we will face considerable planning difficulties and it is vital that a proper, sensible, balanced approach is adopted so that small villages are not completely destroyed by last-minute housing estates developed to provide the homes that will be needed in a hurry.

I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) said about the role of religion and the family in society. My hon. Friend invariably brings a historical perspective to his speeches; indeed, he did so today. During his speech I reflected on the fact that this is not the first time that a speech of that nature has been made to the nation.

The first person to be known in this country as the good doctor—there have been many since—was Dr. Henry Sacheverall. He was a great Anglican divine who, in the 1700s, preached a sermon in which he said that the Church of England was in great danger. He identified that danger as being Erastian Whig bishops as well as the Government of the day. That Government were a Whig junta, not a Tory Government, so the present Government can be acquitted of any malice towards the Church of England. The Whig junta decided that it was necessary to impeach the good doctor. His trial took place in Westminster Hall and he was triumphantly acquitted. The mob in London celebrated for days and weeks afterwards. His acquittal was far more important to the contemporary society than the great battles of the Duke of Marlborough which were taking place at approximately the same time.

One of the reasons why I urge my right hon. Friend to postpone the rising of the House is that I believe it is time that a plaque was set into the floor of Westminster Hall to commemorate the triumphant acquittal of Dr. Sacheverall at his great impeachment trial. It is entirely wrong that the acquittal of the Indian nabob Warren Hastings should be commemorated but not that of the great Anglican divine.

The main reason why I want the recess to be postponed concerns the route that Oliver Cromwell would have taken before he reached the battlefield of Naseby — the decisive battle of the English civil war. The House will be aware that Oliver Cromwell was a son of the old borough of Huntingdon. He would have travelled across Huntingdonshire, as it was, and Northamptonshire before arriving at the battlefield of Naseby.

A more modern battle has been fought over the battlefield of Naseby and that concerns the inquiry into the proposed construction of the A1-M1 link. It was proposed that that road should link the M1-M6 junction at Lutterworth, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Brampton, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). The link will be 45 miles long.

The public inquiry on the proposal lasted for 10½ months and most of the time was taken up with disputes between learned historians — unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge was not one of them—as to exactly where the battle took place. After 10½ months, a profound and learned battle ensued around Naseby. The inspector delivered his report in June last year, but so far we have had no announcement from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport or from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on what they propose to do about that planning inquiry.

The issue matters enormously to my constituents. Oliver Cromwell would have had to cross the river Neme at the small market town of Thrapston. The river Neme bridge at Thrapston is a single carriageway controlled by a traffic light. Every day of the year Thrapston is congested with long queues of heavy traffic in both directions. For 15 years there has been immense planning blight because no decisions have been taken about the proposed bypass—the A1-M1 link.

It would be entirely wrong for the House to adjourn without an announcement by the Secretary of State about what he proposes to do about that road. This is a fundamental matter to my constituency. It is a vital matter to the 5,000 people who live in the town of Thrapston. The indecision has been going on for too long. It is too long since the planning inquiry; it is too long since the inspector reported. It is about time that my right hon. Friend announced what he intends to do.

9.27 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) talked about possible future housing difficulties in his area. I want to deal with the current serious housing problems in my area. The House should not adjourn until we have debated the national housing crisis and the London housing crisis in particular. This week is London housing week. I congratulate the organisers on drawing attention to the severe housing crisis, on pleading for urgent action to alleviate the misery that bad housing causes and on demanding investment in better homes.

In the borough of Waltham Forest 9,000 families are on the housing waiting list. Nearly 1,000 families are homeless and take up 80 per cent. of the available emergency accommodation. It is estimated that 300 new homes are needed in each of the next four years to keep pace. About £200 million is needed for repairs and improvements over the next 10 years.

An answer to a question that I asked recently revealed that Waltham Forest is the 17th worst area in the country for housing. That includes Chingford, which has its problems, but my constituency contains the worst 2·5 per cent. of housing in the country. The Government's housing investment programme allocation is woefully inadequate at £7·5 million—only 80 per cent. of the previous year's figure and certainly nowhere near the £38 million that is needed to begin to tackle the problem.

Waltham Forest's housing director, Chris Langstaff, stated:

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"We know what we need to do to put right both the need for improvement and the need for new building. The only thing that is holding us up is lack of money. At the moment we have to rely on the Government. But the amount of money we have to invest in improvements is not in step with the increasing problems that are occurring. We're not standing still anymore—we're going backwards."

In London the position is as bad. Over 500,000 Londoners are on council waiting lists, 20,000 are homeless and 6,500 are in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The 1985 Greater London house condition survey shows that one in five homes is in bad condition and needs urgent repairs. Many of these repairs would cost three times that household's total annual income. Londoners need £8 billion worth of repairs, and the repair bill nationally is enormous. That is both the council and the private sectors, yet we see housing grants halved nationally, and in Waltham Forest they have been cut out all together.

I have glimpsed the personal consequences of that. Lack of time prevents my going through this in detail, but I have seen women desperate and weeping because they cannot be moved and they fear that their babies are at risk. I have seen a young girl in a bedroom up to her neck in black, damp fungus. And there is a year's waiting list for repairs. There are estates in my constituency that are structurally unsound and where accidents are waiting to happen. There is the Mill Court estate, which needs extensive insulation work. When there is a bout of cold weather, some rooms are unusable and whole families have to huddle in one room. Pensioners do not get out of bed because they cannot keep warm in those conditions.

Housing has been cut by two thirds in real terms by this Government since 1979. This is more than in any other major public service. The Government have been told enough about the damage that has been caused by hon. Members, housing directors, the Institute of Housing, the Duke of Edinburgh in his report "Inquiry into British Housing" and the Church of England. I was going to give plenty of quotations in this debate, but because of shortage of time I cannot do so.

Lord Scarman described Britain as descending to a slum society and referred to a decline to a new Fagin's London, yet the Budget did absolutely nothing for housing. It would have made sense to invest, not just to tackle dilapidation and homelessness, but to create jobs. It has been estimated by a Cambridge economist that £500 million spent on housing would have created 64,000 jobs, while the equivalent amount in tax cuts would at the most create some 10,000 jobs. We have half a million building workers on the dole, when the need is so great. That is a disgraceful indictment of the Government's policies.

We are also faced with a shortage of skills and it is therefore appalling that building training has virtually stopped. This is the Government who said in their manifesto in 1983:

"Our goal is to make Britain the best housed nation in Europe."

That should be a spectacular own goal, but it is really those in housing plight who are the resounding losers. As for the well-known phrase "property-owning democracy," the number of mortgage arrears cases has increased to nearly one in 10 of the new homeless nationally—from 3,000 in 1980 to over 20,000 now.

We need, as a matter of urgency, a housing rescue service. This means a programme to improve existing homes and to build new ones, to build more good quality homes to rent, and to help the young homeless, whom Shelter estimated at 80,000 in 1985. We need insulation work, and sheltered housing schemes for the elderly and people with disabilities. We need to put more into housing subsidy to keep down the rents, which have been forced up artificially. We need protection for private tenants against unreasonable rent rises. We need to increase the level of housing benefit and speed up the payments. Most of all, we need a sensible economic policy to keep interest and mortgage payments down. Then, of course, we need direct help to first-time buyers and those on low incomes, help through housing co-operatives and housing associations, and a greater say for tenants in managing their own estates.

Poor housing is a false economy. It has only stored up more problems for a future Government to face. We have to invest in better homes for our people, homes that are dry, warm and in good repair, and at a price that they can afford.

9.34 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House rises for the Easter recess, I hope that it will consider these few points. A year ago my cousin's wife was murdered in Worcester. She was stabbed to death 52 times in a multi-storey car park. The murder and trial were reported in the papers but, as far as the media were concerned, that was an end of the matter. We all know that in the Palace of Westminster one of our hon. Members was murdered some years ago and we also remember the loss of one of our colleagues at Brighton. Following the vote last night, I think that hon. Members will have to ask themselves, the next time someone is murdered, whether we did everything that we could to stop that murder. I believe that we have failed to do so.

I am president of Essex Dyslexia Association. Until the age of five I had the nick-name of "Double Dutch". I had a very bad stutter—I could not make the sounds "st" or "th". The reason that I have no Cockney accent now is that I had to go to a speech therapist for three years. I hope that the House will do all it can to help attract more speech therapists into the profession by paying them well for the job that they are endeavouring to do. I also hope that all county councils will do their utmost to try to get statements as quickly as possible for those children who are in special educational need.

My final point concerns the Oxford student who went to court to try to save an unborn child. As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has said here, the student involved was not fighting for a father's rights; he was seeking to establish the right to legal protection of an unborn child capable of being born alive under the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929. As the hon. Member for Workington will know, it is quite extraordinary that the student, who had no money, was deprived of the opportunity to seek legal aid. That is something which the House should certainly consider.

9.36 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I thank the hon. Member for commenting at some length on the speech that I made in an Adjournment debate last week on a very important matter.

I just want to comment on a couple of things, the first of which is the failure of the House to debate the reorganisation of the BBC and its effect on the north and north-west regions. Under the new arrangements, the coverage of Cumbria on radio and television has been switched from Newcastle to Manchester, and the people of Cumbria are angry. In a recent poll 96·8 per cent. of 6,042 people polled said that they wanted the north-east coverage back because the new arrangement has broken the cultural link between Cumbria and Newcastle right across the whole of the northern region.

What surprised me was that in a recent speech in my constituency, the head of broadcasting for the BBC in the north-west said:

"We intend to build a new region. It needs more support and a stronger voice."

He then went on to say:

"It now means that several artificial barriers have been brought down, bringing together radio and television for the whole of the north west region."

The BBC is destroying a region that has existed for many years and is imposing upon us a new region based on the administrative changes in outposts of central Government that have been introduced by the Government in industry, employment, environment and other areas since 1979. We are at a loss to know why the BBC does not want to reverse the changes that it introduced late last year.

I want also to mention the matter which I raised earlier today and which has been on the Order Paper over the past couple of days. The House should have been give an opportunity to debate it. I do not want to comment on the activities of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) —that is not my particular task this evening. What I do want to say is that we will make this issue centre stage, because this is the unacceptable face of privatisation. It is wrong when Tory Members abuse their position——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Workington has written to me about this matter and I am considering it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Are you implying, Mr. Speaker, that the letter that I wrote to you this evening complaining about the question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not reveal what he has written to me about, but I have received his letter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I hope that the Leader of the House takes note of what I have said. In reply today he referred to the sanctimonious nature of my question. The right hon. Gentleman will do well to remember that the Government have seduced the people of this country with privatisation over the last six years by promising them substantial speculative gains. We have objected and now is our opportunity to show that this is the unacceptable face of Conservative politics.

Finally, the Prime Minister's visit to the Soviet Union must be regarded as a success. When she moves into her next gear on matters that were raised in the Soviet Union, and that are now being raised in the press—the prospect of a trade war with Japan — she would do well to consider that if she conducts this trade war in an irresponsible, provocative, emotional and nationalist way, she will provoke a political backlash inside Japan that the whole world may live to regret. This Government must be very careful how they conduct this war or these so-called negotiations. They will turn on the British people and provoke great anger among the people of this country. The Government must understand that this debate must not be allowed to get out of hand because it has implications for all of us and for peace throughout the world.

9.43 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): It is typical of this Adjournment debate that in the space of half an hour we have heard about mining subsidence in Barnsley, and Cromwell has been adduced in support of the problems facing the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) and his constituents in their 15-year plight in that town. The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) has rightly drawn attention to the desperate plight of those on the health waiting list in his constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has touched on problems of BBC reorganisation and on other issues that Mr. Speaker would prefer us not to discuss this evening.

I was pleased to hear hon. Members return to the subject of speech therapists. There is wide-ranging support in the House on that issue. It is not a party issue except for the fact that the Government are not providing the funds. A year ago my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) made the same legitimate points and still they have been ignored.

The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) drew attention to the real problem of AIDS and the conflict of public interest between the wish not to injure or harm people who are morally innocent but who suffer from this awful disease, and the desperate need for accurate information so that the Government can develop policies. I hope that the investigations that are now being carried out by the Select Committee will bring some logic to the way in which this information is recorded.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) defended stoutly the jobs of her constituents and described the massive steps that have been made in the reorganisation of the Crewe workshops and the co-operation that her constituents have given, despite the enormous loss of 1,000 jobs, with the expected loss of 600 next year. I can well understand that in the workshops in Crewe there is a real fear that they are being set up for privatisation. The hon. Members for Rutland and Melton and for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) rightly on behalf of their constituents focused attention on the problems facing the health authorities in their areas. They should bear in mind that it is not really the health authority's problem.

Paradoxically, the Government say that they have increased pay for the nurses and then turn to the health authorities and say that nurses' pay has been increased but they expect the health authorities to find the money or they must stop the development of services or cut services. In so far as there is a problem, the hon. Gentlemen have done good work for their constituents in drawing attention to the fact that the main cause is the Government's meanness in the provision of funding for the Health Service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) referred to the problems facing his constituents in Fife. He started with the comment that Scotland had no love for the Prime Minister. I was inclined to point out to him that, while the Prime Minister could

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go on a walkabout in Moscow, there are many areas in Britain where she would not dare do that; large areas are no-go areas for the Prime Minister.

We had an interesting and varied contribution from the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes). He ranged from the toffee paper problem, and parental responsibility for it, to the much more profound question of the new divide. On Monday, we are to debate the issue of a divided Britain, but the hon. Gentleman has discovered a new divide — the moral divide. He was deeply concerned about the moral condition of England. As a Celt, I was delighted that he felt able to exclude my constituents — the Welsh — and the Scots from the problems that he sees developing in England. It was slightly perverse to blame the Church of England for them all; he need look no further than his own Front Bench for the source of much of the trouble facing the country today.

I was desperately sorry to hear about the telephone box near his home. Perhaps now that we have obtained extra parliamentary expenses, he will be able to have his own telephone installed and so overcome his difficulties.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) will, I am sure, have massive support for his concern about the peculiar way in which the Japanese interpret reciprocity in trade. We all endorse action to force the Japanese to open up their markets. I was slightly surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman quote the example of Stanley Press Equipment in his constituency and tell me that it was not the Minister in charge who was wrong, but his civil servants. Under the constitution, in a normal, well-run Department, it is the Minister who is in charge and not his civil servants. Therefore, I was surprised that when the hon. Gentleman went to see the Minister of State, he was completely unaware of the problem. That may explain why so much industry has been led into difficulty by the Department of Trade and Industry.

The concern of the hon. Member for Macclesfield and the hon. Member for Corby about war widows will be echoed by many hon. Members on both sides of the House. As was rightly pointed out, the numbers, and therefore the sums, involved are relatively small. I hate to bring politics into the discussion, and I hope that I will be excused for doing so, but it seems strange that just a couple of weeks after a Budget in which the Chancellor had £6,000 million at his disposal, we hear about all these problems which cannot be solved within the Government's budget. One thing that the Government cannot say this year, or in a forthcoming election campaign, is that they did not have the money. They had the money, but they chose to misuse it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has apologised to me, and I think also to the Leader of the House, because he cannot be here for the reply to the debate. He has a desperate problem in that his constituency faces an invasion of yoghurt-eating yuppies. I was sorry to hear of this affliction. I was more sorry to hear that his constituency has suffered an even worse plight in that it has now attracted the attention of the Secretary of State for the Environment. We are told that the right hon. Gentleman is thinking of issuing directives which will render the local authority in breach of its statutory duties. I and my hon. Friend were surprised because no Minister on record has ever been so in breach of the law of the country as the Secretary of State for the Environment. He is a hardened offender. We try to keep most hardened offenders separate from the innocent, but he is put in charge of all these local authorities and he is leading them into his bad ways. I shared the fury of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) drew attention to the problems that face nurses and the Health Service, the shortage of housing to rent and the problems of teachers in London, all of which are problems of a sort, and if there is one matter about which the Government cannot complain at the moment it is that the resources are not available. The resources are there; the Chancellor boasted that the resources were there, but he chose to use them wrongly.

9.51 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The debate was opened by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), who reminded us of the impending general election, and in that context I should like to say—I am sure that I am far from being alone in this—that one of the sadnesses of that election is that it will see his voluntary retirement from our counsels. He raised, as he has done previously, the question of speech therapists. He was reinforced in his considerations by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). The House is concerned with the profession of speech therapy and its broad relationship to the payments made within the National Health Service to those in other graduate professions. I shall pass to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services the points that have been raised in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) raised the issue of AIDS and confronted the House with a direct problem: the extent to which we want the most comprehensive statistics on this topic when the statistics inevitably must carry some shadow of suspicion, not least because many deaths may have been the subject of a contributory AIDS factor but do not necessarily reflect AIDS solely or predominantly. I thank my hon. friend for raising that point. I understand his ringing cry that it was right for the British public to know the extent of the numbers involved.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has apologised for her absence, but she made an effective speech on behalf of her substantial constituency interest in British Rail engineering Ltd. I shall pass her complaints to my colleagues, but I do not think that I will have added anything new to the controversy. I think that there is a clash of expectation rather than a clash of evidence.

My hon. Friends the Members for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham), for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and for Corby (Mr. Powell) spoke of the difficulties of the Leicester health authority and the problems of underfunding. As I listened, my reaction was one of some familiarity because the West Midlands regional health authority takes a view on the distribution of its resources which many of us believe to be detrimental to the equitable consideration of rural Shropshire. I can assure my hon. Friends that it is in every sense with a spirit of fraternity that I shall pass to my right hon. Friend the points that they argued, and argued in good faith, in a situation which is admittedly complex. It does not show that a snappy and statistical

formula can resolve these problems, but those of us who have to live as constituency Members with those problems know their true significance only too well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton also spoke of the problems of agriculture. I assure him that there will be the chance of a debate shortly after Parliament returns. I shall see that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agricultue, Fisheries and Food is acquainted with all the points that he raised, including the problems of the beef trade as affected by screw cows.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) also talked of the health problems in Fife. I am well equipped with an answer of most compelling complexity, but I hope that he will take it in a written form rather than my taking up a few seconds of my reply in dealing with his points. I shall see that not only are his arguments put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services but that he receives an early reply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) wisely and happily uses this spot to give us a little moral uplift every time we go into recess, and there was no absence of that today. He was joined by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby. I admire my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge. He speaks good sound sense on these matters. It is not perhaps the wisest of courses for politicians to climb into pulpits, any more than it is a wise course for the clergy to take to the hustings, but a certain cross-fertilisation is inevitable in these matters and I accept it.

The more we live in this place passing laws, the more we realise that mere law-making does not bring about moral regeneration or an altered pattern which is essential if, for example, we are to have a happier situation in respect of crime.

Therefore, these debates are valuable in that just for a few minutes we have a chance to talk, as Parliament should talk, in a purely speculative fashion about some of the factors that can conduce a happier moral cement to our nation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby mentioned Bishop Sacheverall. I never thought that I would reply to a debate and say how much I welcomed that contribution. As an unregenerate high churchman, I think that he is a hero worthy of many a plaque around and about London and certainly in the Palace of Westminster. I hold out no hopes in that respect, but it showed that there was a bit of an intellectual lift to our discussions this evening.

That was sustained by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who comprehensively argued the case for the consideration of the problems arising from a shortage of teachers and nurses in central London. He will have recently received a written answer about the nursing pay formula and the circumstances in which it is usually honoured. Clearly I cannot add to that, but I am sure that he, like me, would feel that it was a highly equitable resolution of our affairs if the award were paid in full. That is always one's aspirations, but occasionally one has to admit to disappointment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) had a good blunderbuss with roughly four barrels. On the whole, three were aimed at the Government and one at the Opposition. I sat there in envy listening to the entire performance.

My hon. Friend spoke about Japanese trade, and I have no doubt that that will feature considerably in our debates. I have no wish to be too conciliatory to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—he is not in my good books—but, none the less, he made a brave observation about the state of trade relations between ourselves and Japan, and in all these things the most successful policy is that which is carefully thought out and calculated. I am sure that we shall be inspired by my hon. Friend to that end.

My hon. Friend's second point concerned the continuing misfortunes of the United Kingdom yarn manufacturers. I shall ensure that that point is referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I note his other points, including the one about war widows. As he says, that could be resolved in the Finance Bill Committee. I urgently suggest to him that he volunteers to serve on that Committee so that he can be the author of this much needed reform.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) raised points which were quite chilling to hear. I am told that a disposal order on the land to which he referred has not and will not be issued until it is clear that Hackney does not intend to use it. I hope that when he reads those words he will be calmed.

I find rather touching the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about yuppies. He has almost become the personification of the yuppie. He was born in Devon and with his glorious accent I shall never fear the hard Left. He then goes on to live in that detached part of the home counties called Cheshire. He eventually alights in Hackney, and now spends his time resenting anyone who may wish to follow his career and come into the borough.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) raised points that I will pass to my right hon. Friends concerning subsidence and milk quotas. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), a good, steady performer in our debates and a crowd favourite, touched on housing, and made his case very persuasively. I shall quickly pass it on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I believe that I have now mentioned everyone who has taken part in the debate. On the basis that enough is enough, I shall now conclude my remarks.

It being three hours afer the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Friday 10th April, do adjourn until Wednesday 22nd April, and, at its rising on Friday 1st May, do adjourn until Tuesday 5th May, and the House shall not adjourn on Friday 10th April until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

BROADCASTING

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.),

That the draft Broadcasting (Extension of Duration of IBA's Function) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 16th March, be approved.

STATISTICS OF TRADE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Statistics of Trade Act 1947 (Amendment of Schedule) Order 1987 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 13th March.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Question agreed to.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Motion made, and Question put, pursuing to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1987, dated 6th January 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 12th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Object.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the motion?

Mr. Hughes: Yes.

Question agreed to.

Japan (Investment Opportunities)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Portillo.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I am particularly grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to catch your eye at the end of a day in which matters affecting the relationship between this country and Japan have featured largely in the thoughts of many people up and down the country. I am also happy to follow the invitation of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to debate trade and investment relationships with Japan as a matter of urgency, and I hope that the debate can be seen as beginning this very night.

Let me start by declaring an interest as parliamentary adviser to Cable and Wireless, which is to be the main burden of my remarks. However, I hope that what I have to say will also be seen in the context of some of the work done by the parliamentary information technology committee, of which I have the honour to be chairman. Anyone who has witnessed recent events in respect of British interests, and particularly in respect of investing in Japan, must share my concern at what has been going on for some years now, and at some of the difficulties faced by financial houses in this country—and, indeed, by British trading interests. It is on investment that I wish to concentrate, my remarks. I have mentioned Cable and Wireless not just because I am seeking to assist one company, but because it is generally accepted—and the Government have made it plain—that it represents a test case.

The test is of Japanese sincerity in moving towards a more liberal trade and investment regime. I should like to concentrate in the short time available to me, on the role of our Government—and, indeed, that of the Japanese Government—as well as the interest taken in the House. That interest has been effectively summarised by early day motion No. 803, which as of this morning stood in my name and in those of 117 other right hon. and hon. Members on all sides of the House. That shows the full extent of the present concern about the position, in which legitimate British interests in pursuit of a more equitable trade and investment balance with Japan are being frustrated.

I shall not broaden my remarks by way of background, but there are other parallel concerns. There is the £3·7 billion adverse trading balance announced last week, the problems relating to the number of British companies working on the Japanese stock exchange—about seven, compared with 40-odd Japanese operators in this country—and the exclusion of British suppliers in the new Osaka airport development. It is very hard to explain away that sort of continued imbalance in terms of a more open trading policy. But, as I shall try to show, I believe that within Japan itself there are arguments between what might be described broadly as the old guard and the new guard. These are arguments in which Britain has a part to play and which should be determined with the help of Japan's friends and of this House.

I shall outline the background to the problems affecting Cable and Wireless. The company was invited to submit a proposal as an alternative international telecommunications network, and that was the so-called second KDD. I emphasise "second" because there was—in KDD—

already a 100 per cent. domestically and internationally telecommunications network, and that will continue. We are talking about an opportunity under Japanese law, which allows for up to one third foreign investment in Japan, and not about breaking into a monopoly. We are talking also about a company which is recognised as the oldest and—I think that many would accept this—the most experienced international telecommunications operator, which brings to Japan, together with partners from the United States, an opportunity to be essentially the hub of the Pacific telecommunications scene.

There are therefore great advantages to Japan as well as to the United States and Britain in a proposal, especially through the cable, which would be privately financed between Japan and Alaska, which would be part of a worldwide circle of communication in which all three countries could benefit. That was essentially the proposal which, for brevity, I shall call the IDC consortium. It was a unique Japanese company or a unique Japanese joint venture.

There was put forward at a later stage a proposal by another grouping which, for brevity, I shall call by its initials, which are ITJ. It is dominated by Japanese merchant houses, notably, Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Sumitomo, all of which are users and none of which has telecommunications experience. It is clearly a different sort of company. The analogy that has been presented of oil and water is apt, but I prefer what has since happened to be described as a shotgun marriage. Instead of considering the benefits of the two proposals, as would be normal, certainly in Britain and as is normal practice in Japan, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications has sought to make a shotgun marriage. It has not considered the proposals, which, in the case of IDC, come from Japanese as well as British and American interests. It has simply said, "We are not prepared to consider what you have to offer, despite the fact that you have already engaged in feasibility studies covering links between Japan and the United States and your Pacific hub concept." It has said, "You must go away and bring in more partners, and, by the way, the partners must be large Japanese merchant houses and banks."

The effect is obvious. If an agreement is made on that basis, the equity will be diluted, and that will reduce the management role. It seemed certain that, in the early negotiations, this would have precluded board representation. The role of the Japanese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications was blatant. It was effectively to rule out effective foreign involvement.

The stage has been reached when a distinguished Japanese industrialist, Mr. Watanabe, has put forward the latest proposal. It involves eight companies, one American, one British and six Japanese. All would have equal stakes in the company and all would have directors on the board. They would be described as the core companies. I am advised that this is still a vague proposal. What is more, it suffers from the fundamental objection that it is still a shotgun marriage. It seeks to bring together two groups of wide differences in background and experience. It ignores the industrial, economic, financial and national logic of the two groupings.

I turn to the actions of Her Majesty's Government. I wish to pay tribute to the work that has taken place over a long period that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has undertaken in writing to the Japanese Prime Minister. I was glad to hear my right hon. Friend say in reply to my question earlier today that the Japanese Prime Minister has indicated his personal interest and involvement in the issue, and I am pleased that it is being treated in that way. I also pay tribute to the work of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on his visit to Japan in November. That work has gone on continuously through his Department, and will continue in the future.

I want to ask my hon. Friend a few specific questions, and I hope that he can assure the House that the Government have them well in mind as we look to further steps. The orders under the Financial Services Act are obviously designed to meet the problems of imbalances for banks and insurance houses. I am sure that it will not have escaped my hon. Friend's attention that Sumitomo, one of the houses that operates in London and Tokyo, has been proposed as one of the eight core companies under the latest Watanabe proposals. Those proposals do not say that the core companies will exclusively occupy 12·5 per cent. each. I fear that other companies will be invited to join in the lower equity brackets, as has hitherto been the case. Anything that my hon. Friend could tell us about that would be of interest.

The immediate laying of orders particularly affects the imbalance and the problems that face British finance houses that are seeking entry into Japan. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that Her Majesty's Government will not hesitate to bring forward further legislation if need be, to meet the problems that have been highlighted by the Cable and Wireless investment proposals? The latest suggestion has highlighted the fact that Sumitomo finance house is involved in the proposals that are now being recommended to the Japanese Government. Depending on how matters move along, if further legislation is required, I hope that the Government will not shrink from introducing it.

On the merits of Cable and Wireless's argument, I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the present proposal is widely seen to be in the interests of Japan, the United States and the United Kingdom. Does he agree that it is reasonable to ask that the IDC proposal for those three major interests should be considered on its merits and given a response?

My hon. Friend must agree that it is not too much to ask that any such proposal that is put forward in good faith under Japanese law should be given the courtesy of consideration. If, at the same time, further consideration of the alternative IIJ consortium suggests that two licences are needed, why not accept that? I do not think that that should necessarily be regarded as a bad outcome.

Will my hon. Friend confirm that the wider international interests to which I have referred are suffering at the present time? Incidentally, I understand that the President of the United States has written to the Japanese Prime Minister to express his concern about the present restrictions in the Japanese telecommunications market. My hon. Friend must agree that, in the wider international interest, there is a common cause between the United States and this country. He may also want to confirm my understanding that, in Japan, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Office and MITI are in favour of the kind of proposal for inward investment in Japan that I have described to the House. It is certainly clear that the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications is out on a limb on this matter and is trying to block that development. Although I understand my hon. Friend's

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scepticism, that is the position that has been enunciated in many quarters. It is important for us to have that confirmed or denied.

All this should be viewed in the context of a British concern that is the largest single purchaser of Japanese telecommunications equipment. It is also the oldest international operator in the Pacific basin. It has followed the Japanese way of doing things and has sought to work in every way to meet not only the law but the spirit of Japan, including, for example, meeting suggestions from the Japanese Government as to the nature and content of staffing at its organisation in that country.

I certainly do not want to advocate a trade war with Japan. As chairman of the parliamentary information and technology committee, I welcome the kind of Japanese investment that we have seen through companies such as Sony and Hitachi in Wales, and through other companies in the north-east and midlands. They have brought important technical know-how and jobs to these parts of the country.

I was heartened by the comments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on radio and television tonight. He said that the orders that were brought before the House were no idle threats. I was also heartened when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in response to my question earlier today, made it plain that she was following the matter closely and personally with the Prime Minister of Japan, and pointed to the relevance of the orders before the House in considering Cable and Wireless investment. As my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for consumer protection and corporate affairs sets out for Japan this weekend, I am sure that the House will want to send him best wishes for what is an important mission, both in terms of financial services and the problem to which I have drawn attention. I have tried to show that it is not only a two-way trade but is perhaps a tripartite interest in which all three countries stand to gain a great deal. Failure to agree would be to the loss of all of us, including the many hon. Members who continue to follow the matter with the greatest care and attention.

10.17 pm

The Parliamenary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) for raising this matter at a particulary topical moment. He will know that I have been connected with the issue in the European context, which is getting access for companies such as Cable and Wireless to the international telecommunications requirements of countries such as Italy and Portugal. Our policy in that regard can be transferred, almost in its entirety, to the matter now facing us in Tokyo. However, it is difficult at present to address the matter of investment without saying something about Japan's overall trading position.

Last year, Japan's current account surplus reached $80 billion, of which $5 billion was accounted for by the surplus with the United States, $17 billion with the European Community, and $3·7 billion with the United Kingdom. It is in that context that I shall address the points that my hon. Friend raised—British interests in this trading position, wider international interests, and indeed the relationship between the laying of today's order and the current issues now being dealt with in Tokyo. The reasons for the mixture of surpluses that Japan is operating are complex, but clearly the situation cannot be sustained without a serious threat to the maintenance of the international trading system.

Revaluation of the yen, which has risen by 65 per cent. against the dollar and 41 per cent. against sterling since September 1985, will, in time, work through to the visible trade balance by making Japanese exports more expensive and imports more competitive, but if this process is to achieve its full effect it has to be accompanied by the adoption of appropriate economic policies by the Japanese Government, including the expansion of domestic demand. That is the course of action that the European Community and the United States are now pressing on Japan, but particular emphasis is also being given to market opening so that our exporters can take advantage of the increased competitiveness of their goods.

As the House will know, the Community has now launched a GATT case about discriminatory treatment on alcoholic drinks, and there will be no hesitation about taking other cases where our or other member states' rights to fair access are being denied. Other sectors are under examination with a view to launching exploratory discussions with the Japanese Government. The list includes automobiles, automotive parts and medical equipment, but other products will certainly be taken up as the preparatory work is completed.

On access to the European markets, we make full use of the Community procedures under GATT to protect British manufacturers from unfair trade. Anti-dumping duties have been imposed in recent months against Japanese manufacturers of photocopiers, bearings and weighing machines.

The Japanese Government must recognise the seriousness of purpose of the Community and the United States of America. We wish to see substantial progress across a broad front with real and measurable results within an acceptable time scale. That is what is implied by the European Community's call for Japan to adopt an import target. This is not the occasion on which to speculate about what will happen if Japan does not respond to the pressure for action on her part. As has already been observed today, trade wars are not a solution and once unleashed have the potential to damage the originally aggrieved nation as retaliatory reactions ricochet around the world. Therefore, I can understand why the United States is considering the position carefully following its announcement of a possible retaliatory package. However, hon. Members have given a fair indication of their feelings and I am sure that the Japanese Government will take note of the sentiments expressed by Members of the House and by Ministers.

The British Government's stance on investment is clear. We believe in a minimum of barriers to the free movement of investment according to the commercial judgment of the companies involved, in just the same way as we believe in free movement of goods and services. Abolition of exchange controls pointed the way. Indeed, we have actively encouraged inward investment to the United Kingdom from Japan and other countries. We recognise the advantages that that brings to both sides.

Japanese overseas investments have soared in recent years, the greatest increase being in the far east, but foreign investment in Japan has remained modest. Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, heavy restrictions were placed on

foreign investment in Japan. Although some liberalising measures have been introduced, many of the foreign companies which have pursued investment in market opportunities in Japan have come up against a variety of obstacles and have subsequently withdrawn as a result. Full acquisition of an existing local company is generally not possible in Japan. Indeed, the aggressive or disputed takeover of one Japanese company by another is virtually unknown. This is just one of the factors that has hindered the entry of foreign companies into the market.

I shall now turn to the specific case of the telecommunications sector. The Government welcomed the liberalisation of Japanese telecommunications in 1985. Among other things, this allowed up to 33 per cent. foreign participation in telecommunications operations. Yet since then we have seen the blocking of any foreign shareholding in Nippon Telegraph and Telephone. Another example is now hitting the headlines in the press. Cable and Wireless, as part of the International Digital Communications consortium, is bidding for a licence to operate as a competitor to KDD, the existing Japanese monopoly supplier of international telecommunications services.

The Government have followed this case closely for many months. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry raised this issue with Mr. Karasawa, Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, last November. He was told that foreign participation in telecommunications was unwelcome, despite the fact that the provisions of Japanese law allow significant foreign shareholdings. Since then, Her Majesty's Government have raised the issue repeatedly, culminating last month in representations from the Prime Minister to Mr. Nakasone. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House this afternoon, she received a reply from Mr. Nakasone today. We wish to look further at the matter in the light of the terms of that reply.

The attitude of the Japanese Government is in sharp contrast to Her Majesty's Government's liberalisation policy, which made no distinction between United Kingdom and foreign shareholdings. Our policy has introduced real consumer choice in the United Kingdom and an almost unlimited choice of equipment. Japanese companies have not been slow in taking advantage of those developments, and I am sure the British consumer has welcomed the widened choice, innovative services and reduced costs that this has brought.

How different the story has been in Japan. Cable and Wireless is one of our leading companies with long-standing expertise in the provision and operation of international telecommunications systems. Yet another welcome success in Malaysia, announced today, has demonstrated that capability.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Does my hon. Friend not accept that that 51 per cent. Malaysian Government and 49 per cent. Cable and Wireless shows what an enlightened Government can do in such a situation? Surely the lesson is obvious for countries such as Japan?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Across the far east the company has pursued a number of policies, with mixtures of collaboration and individual, which have provided an enhanced telecommunications facility in that part of the world. I am sure that our colleagues in Japan will draw the appropriate moral from that.

That company is listed on the Tokyo stock exchange and has close links with many Japanese suppliers. Indeed, it is a major purchaser of Japanese equipment. Yet is has faced considerable obstacles. If that company has difficulties, how will others fare?

Together with the other members of the IDC consortium, Cable and Wireless proposed, at no cost to the Japanese Government, a totally alternative state of the-art system to compete effectively with KDD. This system would incorporate a privately financed cable linking Japan to the United States, thus providing a cost-effective real choice for consumers.

The Government have welcomed the bid to be involved in that sector in Japan. The Japanese and the United Kingdom Governments have agreed that one means of opening the Japanese market is by companies from both countries working together to mutual benefit. The IDC consortium is a shining example of that, combining British, American and Japanese experience. However, seen from here, it has faced considerable obstacles in its attempts to invest its own resources at its own commercial risk. Merger talks have been initiated before any appraisal of the IDC proposal.

We have consistently made the point that telecommunications is increasingly an international business, that foreign participation is expressly permitted under Japanese law, that the co-operation in the IDC consortium is just the type that both Governments have agreed to promote, and that the investment is entirely at the commercial risk of the parties involved. I understand that similar points are now being taken up by the United States Government of behalf of Pacific Telesis and Merrill Lynch, two American members of the IDC consortium.

It is for Cable and Wireless to decide at what level it is prepared to participate in this venture, whether within its original consortium or as part of a merged company. However, it also becomes the Government's business when British companies are faced with what seems like unfounded opposition and discrimination.

The position on this issue changes almost daily. Indeed, we have just received Cable and Wireless's latest public statement, which indicates that Cable and Wireless will discuss, with its partners, the latest proposals from Watanabe. While Cable and Wireless considers its position, we too shall be studying closely the reply from Prime Minister Nakasone. We shall monitor the position closely as, indeed, we have been doing for several months. However, I should emphasise to the House that no final decision has been taken in Japan on the Cable and Wireless issue. Commercial negotiations are continuing and Cable and Wireless is considering the most recent developments. The Government will continue to play their part.

I note what my hon. Friend said about retaliatory measures. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced in the House today, we have made an order bringing powers into force under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Let me say a little more about the financial services sector. I recognise the steps that the Japanese authorities have taken since the 1970s to liberalise their financial markets. In 1980 an important measure was implemented in the foreign exchange and foreign trade control law which removed the blanket control on international capital flows in to and out of Japan. The Japanese Government have adopted a step-by-step approach to liberalisation. However, by contrast, it is fair to say that

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in the United Kingdom we had the full courage of our convictions, and, in just a few strides, achieved our goal of full liberalisation.

Bilateral talks between our two Governments since 1984 have achieved significant progress, but we believe that much more could be achieved. The Financial Services Act, passed by the House last year, allows all who are "fit and proper" to carry on financial business here and we expect no less from other countries. As hon. Members will recall, we considered that it was necessary to include in that Act powers to encourage foreign countries to liberalise. If we are not satisfied with reciprocal access to a country, we shall have the discretion to prevent its firms from transacting banking, investment and insurance business here. We have made it clear that we shall not hesitate to use the reciprocity powers at our disposal, if necessary. This is a message that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for corporate and consumer affairs, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), will carry with him to Tokyo on Saturday.

As my hon. Friend said, this is a test case. On this and the general question of reciprocal trading opportunities let no one underestimate the seriousness of our intent to see that British companies of all kinds are given a fair chance to test their growing competitiveness in Japan's markets.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 3 April 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Anstey Lane (Road Safety)

9.35 am

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of the governors, parents, teachers, staff and pupils of English Martyrs comprehensive school, Anstey lane, Leicester and the Beaumont Leys school, Anstey lane, Leicester and of local residents and Leicester citizens following the tragic death of Lisa Szymczak, aged 15, on 12 February 1987, outside the English Martyrs school, Anstey lane, a road with notorious hazards which all previous efforts have failed to remedy.

The humble petition is that this House

Will urge the Government to ensure the taking of immediate steps to make the Anstey Lane safe for the pupils, teachers and staff of the English Martyrs School and of the Beaumont Leys School and for local residents, and to remove the dire hazards that led to the tragic death of Lisa Szymczak.

More than 12,000 people have signed this petition, which I present to the House. It is the most earnest wish of Lisa's family that there should be no other tragedies here or elsewhere on the roads due to lack of resources and failure to take the necessary steps to avoid such awful occurrences in future.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Obscene Publications Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.36 am

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is the second occasion in just over 14 months that the House has had the opportunity to debate the law on obscenity. Last year my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) presented the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill. Although that Bill received its Second Reading by a majority of 161 votes to 31, it failed to make progress beyond the Committee stage. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme for his work last year. I am quite sure that, even if his Bill failed, his endeavours resulted in the public and broadcasters taking a much closer look at the issues of obscenity and TV violence. I hope that the Obscene Publications Bill before the House today, which I am pleased to say is supported by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, will build on the foundations so ably prepared by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme last year.

This Bill is evidence that these issues will not go away. There is increasing public concern about the rise in crimes of violence, the ever more ready availability of pornographic material in bookshops and the general decline in moral values. In all this, the press has a part to play. However, the central focus of attention must be the most powerful medium of all—television.

There is a sense that the existing law is not adequate to protect young people from ever more gratuitous violence and explicit sex. Of course, broadcasting was specifically excluded from the Obscene Publications Act 1959. Television is not the only influence at work creating the social climate in which we live. As we have seen very readily in recent weeks, the tabloid press is engaged in a dirty war as each paper vies with its rivals to produce the most lurid exposé of some sordid real or imaginary episode in the private lives of its victims. Hon. Members are not immune from that treatment.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): As the hon. Gentleman takes as an example the horrors of the contemporary popular press, why are the Conservative party and, no doubt, the hon. Gentleman so keen to free television and radio, as they see it, to follow the pattern of the free press, which we so deplore?

Mr. Howarth: I trust that broadcasters will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. They would be appalled to hear him say that broadcasters would act in the same vein as do some journalists in the popular press.

Mr. Buchan: The Conservative party wants it.

Mr. Howarth: My party has no wish to see the war that I mentioned repeated on the air waves.

There is a new Sunday newspaper ostensibly devoted to sport, more than one third of which is given over to pictures of busty women. The advertisements are for racy videos, naughty leather catalogues with a free bullwhip and devices that are euphemistically called love aids.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood) *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I know that the hon. Lady has an interest in this, but——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Let her hang herself.

Ms. Short: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I take a great interest in these matters. What part of the Bill would prevent such pictures from appearing in popular newspapers?

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Lady should bear with me for a little longer. I have great sympathy with what she says, and perhaps as I develop my speech she will come with me rather than be against me on this.

The publications that I have mentioned are readily available at local newsagents and on railway platforms. So, too, are the so-called soft porn magazines, although, thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury), they are now required to be placed out of reach of children and to present inoffensive covers. However, a glance inside reveals page after page of full frontal pictures of women in the crudest poses, with yet more pages of clinically illustrated sex aids. In one publication, which I bought at a motorway service station on my way down from my constituency at the weekend, there is a five page feature called "Readers' Wives", in which readers are invited to send in crude photographs of their wives. Even the most ardent culture vulture would think that there is not the least artistic merit in that.

There is a common strand in all this literature. Sex is a mechanical, self-gratifying business in which a loving relationship plays no part and marriage is just passé.

Is it any wonder that with the ready availability of such garbage children are struggling harder than ever to establish what constitutes proper moral values? Of course, some will say that parents must act responsibly and ensure that their children do not have access to such material, but why must parents be constantly on the lookout when going about their ordinary shopping business? What chance is there for the young adolescent who, out of natural curiosity, leafs through the sort of literature that I have described, which is available even at motorway service stations? Why should he not regard the behaviour illustrated in them as normal, sexual deviation as perfectly acceptable and marriage as an outmoded institution? Is he to regard girls as mere sex objects, and are girls—who are instinctively unwilling to be drawn into this "liberated" lifestyle—to regard themselves as abnormal if they do not comply?

I asked the Metropolitan police why such publications are so freely available and are not caught by the Obscene Publications Act 1959. They told me that, 18 months ago, the sort of magazines that I showed them would unquestionably have been declared obscene and been forfeited, but the porn merchants keep pressing further forward at the boundaries of what is acceptable. The police explained that when they go before the magistrates with the hard porn in the morning it is ruled unacceptable, but when they go before the magistrates in the afternoon with the softer porn that I have described, it is light relief for the magistrates.

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman may shake his head, but people become inured to such material, and that which was unacceptable 18 months ago is now acceptable. That is the problem.

It may be argued that some of the material has a therapeutic value for some people, but just as heroin addicts started with cannabis, so today's child porn consumer was yesterday's soft porn reader.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The hon. Gentleman appears to be saying that the law is perfectly adequate, but that it is not being applied properly. He is making the unnecessary and unwarranted slur that magistrates are too soft, but in doing so he is conceding that the present law is perfectly adequate in relation to what he calls hard porn.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman has completely misunderstood me. I believe that the law is incapable of proper interpretation and that magistrates have great difficulty. I dare say that some of them are soft, but I suspect that the vast majority of magistrates, who are so exposed to this material, find it difficult to interpret the existing law. That is why the Bill is before the House.

Let us leave the world of porn for a moment and consider the video shops that are springing up all over the country. One often finds videos for rent in garages or corner shops. They are stuffed with videos which have very salacious covers. Recently a constituent of mine, who is not a sensitive person and not necessarily a member of the silent majority—she is a journalist—told me that she had been shopping with her young son and had seen a huge poster advertising a video showing a dismembered hand dripping with blood. Her son had nightmares for two days after that. It illustrates the point that, as people go about their ordinary business, they must protect their children from such rubbish. Thanks to the valiant efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright), I suspect that those who produce such videos are more likely to be prosecuted under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 than under the Video Recordings Act 1984.

During the past 30 years in England and Wales recorded rape cases have increased by 560 per cent., from 480 in 1957 to 2,288 last year. Recorded cases of violence against the person have increased by 1,145 per cent., or twelvefold, from 10,960 to 125,500. No doubt the experts will say that the increase in rape cases can be accounted for by more sensitive policing, not only by the availability of the literature that I have mentioned. I prefer to take the commonsense view that, if women are increasingly portrayed as mere sex objects, it should surprise no one if the readers of such magazines are encouraged to treat them in that way.

Mr. Mikardo: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to press on. I have given way a number of times.

Mr. Mikardo: Not all that much.

Mr. Howarth: Come on then, quickly.

Mr. Mikardo: The hon. Gentleman has saved some time by giving way, because had he not done so I should have had to spell out the point at length in a speech. In the light of what the hon. Gentleman said about women being portrayed as sex objects, why did many of his hon. Friends, including those who supported the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr.

Churchill), and who no doubt support this Bill, shout down my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) when she sought leave to bring in a ten-minute Bill to ban such publications?

Mr. Howarth: I cannot account for my right hon. and hon. Friends. I think that there is a marginal difference—this is why my Bill is phrased as it is—between some of the pictures that appear in the newspapers and the material about which I am talking. I have not brought it into the Chamber, but later I would be happy to show the hon. Gentleman some of the material that especially worries me. I have some sympathy with the hon. Lady. That is at one end of the spectrum. It goes down to a very deep cesspit of filth at the bottom.

Against the background of increasingly degenerate material, what can we do? No doubt some of my libertarian friends—who seem to have left the Chamber for the moment—will say, "Nothing," and will argue that after a while people will find all this stuff boring. As the threshold of acceptance falls, more and more porn passes on to the bookstands unchallenged. Despite that, in the past 10 years, the Metropolitan police have seized more than 9·5 million books, magazines, films, and so on.

As things stand, that slide will continue. I believe that Parliament should say that enough is enough and provide a more effective test for obscenity than that provided by the Obscene Publications Act 1959, which is not working as effectively as it should. The present test of whether material is

"likely to deprave or corrupt"

is based on the 1868 definition of Lord Chief Justice Cockburn. That must be complemented by a definition more readily understood by today's jurors.

The Williams committee, in its report on obscenity and film censorship in 1979, considered that it was

"essential . . . that the law should be responsive to flux in public opinion".

The Bill seeks to extend the test for obscenity in the 1959 Act by adding to the existing depraved and corrupt test a new test based on gross offensiveness. This test will apply to all articles currently covered by the Obscene Publications Act — books, magazines, photographs, videos and so on—which a reasonable person would regard as grossly offensive by reason of the way in which they portray violence, horror, sex or drugs. Unlike the existing Obscene Publications Act, the new test would also apply to sex aids, bondage items and so on, but would exclude contraceptives. Any such article would be deemed to be obscene where a person publishes it and a reasonable person regards that publication as grossly offensive. Under existing law, a magazine that would not be grossly offensive to adults could be obscene when it was presented to a child.

The defence of public good in section 4 of the 1959 Act would continue to apply. Therefore, no offence would be committed if the defence could prove that the publication of the article in question was justified as being for the public good, on the ground that it was in the interests of science, literature, art, learning or objects of general concern.

The Williams committee proposed that material whose unrestricted availability was offensive to reasonable people should be supplied in premises to which persons under 18 were not admitted. The new test of gross offence to a reasonable person would be more strict than the test recommended by the Williams committee. Such material would be banned rather than be available in adult-only shops, as proposed by the Williams committee.

I readily concede that this is a difficult area in which to legislate and that it does not lend itself to easy black and white solutions. However, I must emphasise that the grossly offensive requirement requires grave affront to have been caused, and a jury would have to be persuaded of that. It is not sufficient for one person, who deems himself to be reasonable, and who says that he has been grossly offended, to persuade a jury. The case would have to be presented to a jury.

Inevitably, there is a degree of subjectivity about the matter. However, over a period of time case law would be built up which would assist. The concept has the vital merit of being able to respond to changes in public perception of what is acceptable or unacceptable, as proposed by the Williams committee.

Representations have been made to me concerning the "taken as a whole" provision in the 1959 Act. I believe that there is considerable merit in the argument that that should be spelt out. It is the intention of the Bill that items should not simply be taken as snapshots out of context.

Mr. Mikardo: It says the opposite.

Mr. Howarth: It does not. Perhaps it is not sufficiently spelt out. I propose that in Committee it will be sensible to ensure——

Mr. Buchan: The Bill says the opposite.

Mr. Howarth: I wish that hon. Members would not interrupt me from a sedentary position.

Mr. Buchan *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was informed a moment ago that I should not intervene from a sedentary position. As the hon. Gentleman will observe, I am now standing and perhaps I am now entitled——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the mere fact of standing does not give him the right to intervene in another Member's speech.

Mr. Howarth: The absence of the "taken as a whole" provision in the new definition has led some to assert that it would be possible for material that is not grossly offensive in context to be separated from that context and form the basis of a successful prosecution. There is no intention in the Bill to depart from the principle of the 1959 Act, which believes that the whole work should be considered. It seems doubtful whether, in practice, the court would interpret an article as applying to only part of a complete work of which it is an integral part. However, to put the matter beyond doubt an amendment could be discussed in Committee. I thank the members of the British Videogram Association and the Booksellers Association, who have made a forceful case to me on this matter.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), who has been attempting to interrupt, when discussing the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill last year, said that it did not deal with the drip by drip technique of more and more violence on

[Mr. Howarth]

the television. It has been said to me that one cannot take an individual film and say that it is grotesque and a departure from the guidelines. However, by considering the matter as a whole people will be able to apply this Bill, when it is enacted, to deal with the drip by drip technique rather than isolated individual scenes. The Bill will affect books, magazines, videos and films. In the case of films, proceedings would continue, as now, to be subject to the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

I have received representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Mr. Marshall)—unfortunately he is unable to be here today—about the live theatre. I am pleased to confirm that the Bill will not affect theatres, which are governed by separate legislation. The test of obscenity in the Theatres Act 1968 is fairly similar to the definition contained in the Obscene Publications Act 1959. However, theatre productions are not dependent on the definition in the 1959 Act.

Television appears to be one of the most contentious issues in the Bill, with the proposal in clause 3 that broadcasts should become subject to the 1959 Act. There is no doubt in any quarter about the enormous power of television. As the BBC's late director general, Sir Hugh Greene, observed:

"Television is the most powerful medium ever to affect the thinking and behaviour of people."

Clearly, that view is shared by advertisers, who would not be prepared to pay more than £1,000 per second for a 30-second slot on commercial television at peak time if they did not believe that that exposure promoted their products or enhanced their sales' prospects.

In recognition of the power at their disposal, broadcasters have accepted a responsibility for what they put out. The House is aware that the BBC is governed by the guidelines set out in the resolution of the board of governors dated 8 January 1981, which states:

"The Board accepts that so far as possible the programmes for which they are responsible should not offend against good taste or decency or be likely to encourage or incite to crime or lead to disorder, or be offensive to public feeling. While the Board recognise that in an ever-changing society it is impossible to ensure that what is inoffensive to one person will never offend another, they are determined to keep under constant review the standards of all broadcast programmes and the reaction of the public to them."

Independent Television is governed by similar, but statutory, duties laid upon it by the Broadcasting Act 1981, which provided:

"nothing is included in the programmes which offends against good taste or decency or is likely to encourage or incite to crime or to lead to disorder or to be offensive to public feeling."

Complaints by the public about increasing foul language, gratuitous violence and explicit sex scenes are met every time by bland assurances from the authorities, whether the BBC or the IBA, such as, "Do not worry, old boy, we keep a close watch over the output." The guidelines are quoted and waved in front of us as evidence of the broadcasters' caring attitude and concern.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme said last year that the guidelines did not need reviewing, but that they needed to be upheld and observed. He was right then, and attitudes might have changed among the broadcasters, who recognise the attention that the House and the public have given to these matters.

The guidelines are clear and must be upheld. The IBA guidelines are spelt out graphically. On language, they say:

"It is important if the freedom"—

that is, the freedom of producers and the freedom of expression—

"is not to be jeopardised to avoid the gratuitous use of language likely to offend."

A survey conducted last year by the National Viewers and Listeners Association found that of 450 programmes covered no fewer than 88 contained foul language, and that about one quarter of those were BBC1 programmes.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): My hon. Friend uses the phrase "foul language." If he is to persuade us of the value of his Bill, he must at least give us an indication of where foul language begins, and give us an example or two.

Mr. Howarth: I happened to watch "The Singing Detective" on video recently. In the episode that I saw the word "bloody" was used about 15 times.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): So what?

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Lady may not think that the word "bloody" is offensive, but I hope that the House is not so out of touch that it believes that such language is now part of the accepted language of everyday people. There are worse words — [HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] There are very much worse words, but it is not my intention to use them in the House so that they can be broadcast. I see no point in that. I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would call me to order if I did that. We adhere more to our guidelines on good language in the House than do our friends in broadcasting.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): My hon. Friend does not have to define foul language, because the point of the Bill is to make the broadcasters accountable for their own guidelines. It is naughty of the Bill's opponents to try to press my hon. Friend into making judgments which, under the Bill, will be for the courts to make.

Mr. Howarth: As always, my hon. Friend hits the nub of the argument—whether broadcasters should be judge and jury in their own cause. They admit that they are the censors, and they do not like the idea of somebody else calling them to account.

The Bill is not based upon a fiction or upon the highly sensitive attitude of a minority of people whom we represent. One should go through the guidelines and spell them out.—*[Interruption.]* I am not going to use in the House the kind of words that I imagine Opposition Members would like me to use. I hope that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will not press me to do that, because in her company I should find it difficult to use such language. I hope that she does not find that too sexist—*[Interruption.]* I do not think that the hon. Lady should be too firm in her attacks on sexism.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howarth: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I must press on.

I turn to the guidelines on sex and nudity. Much of the world's great drama and fiction has been concerned with love and passion. It would be wrong, if not impossible, to require writers to renounce all intention to shock or disturb, but the aim should be to move not to offend. The

portrayal of sexual behaviour and nudity needs to be defensible in context and presented with tact and discretion. No hon. Member would disagree with that.

I shall give an example of what I mean, because the Bill contains nothing that I would not be anxious to defend. I promised my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) and others that I would see "The Singing Detective" and not confine my viewing to the clip that Mrs. Whitehouse brought to the House. I saw the episode in context, and I remain firmly of the view that it is no part of the business of public service broadcasting, which goes directly into people's homes, to put on television explicit scenes of sexual intercourse. Why, suddenly, in 1986 did that become acceptable, when for the past 50 years such scenes have not been shown on television? The reason is that producers are always anxious to press further——

Mr. Fisher: Give an example.

Mr. Howarth: I have just given an example. The hon. Gentleman was obviously not listening. If he listened instead of interrupting, I could make some progress.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It was a splendid work.

Mr. Howarth: It was a splendid and artistic work. I accept that, but I do not accept the need to put it on television.

Mr. Buchan: It was a good programme.

Mr. Howarth: I am referring, not to the programme but to the episode.

Mr. Buchan: But it was part of the programme.

Mr. Howarth: I accept that. My argument is that the episode should not have contained that scene. This is probably the nub of the issue. I believe in the free society, but there are no absolute freedoms in a free society. Freedoms are constrained. The freedom of expression is constrained by the libel laws, by the laws on sedition and by the race relations law. We are discussing where to draw the line. One should not be too sidetracked by individual episodes, because principles are at stake, but one should know what one is talking about.

Another example is the Channel 4 red triangle programme, "No Mercy No Future" in which a mental patient is raped by her doctor. Another film shows a gang rape. We know that the people in the country are desperately worried by the increase in rape and crimes of violence. There is no division in the House on that issue and we know the strength of feeling in the country. Is it right that our television screens should portray scenes of gang rape which we and the broadcasters know can be imitated? Broadcasters know the power of television. They know that people imitate what they see on television.

Ms. Clare Short: I have never seen a rape on television.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Lady may not have done, but the fact is that is it has been shown.

Mr. Fisher: On what programme?

Mr. Howarth: I shall give the hon. Gentleman the title of the programme, if he is so interested. Perhaps he wants to look at it.

The IBA's code on violence states:

"People seldom view just one programme. An acceptable minimum of violence in each individual programme may add up to an intolerable level over a period.

Violence which is shown as happening long ago or far away may seem to have less impact on the viewer, but it remains violence. Horror in costume remains horror."

It is greatly to its credit that the BBC has set up a committee under Guy Cumberbatch to examine violence on television. The formation of that committee is in direct response to public pressure. The BBC has also introduced new guidelines for producers——

Mr. Fisher: The Wyatt committee?

Mr. Howarth: It is the Wyatt committee. I have the guidelines here. They are unexceptionable. For example, it is stated:

"Will it shock to no good purpose? Will it frighten or alarm? Above all, is it justified in this context?"

The BBC has rightly addressed those matters. It is because of public pressure and pressure from the House that it is doing so. I welcome that. It has a special responsibility, because, unlike other media, television is beamed straight into people's homes. We should never lose sight of that fact.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I hope that in developing his point my hon. Friend will show that the difference between television and other media is that television is almost uniquely under the control of the user and owner of viewing equipment. That gives a special property which means that, in the exercise of individual freedom and responsibility—a concept which my hon. Friend and I share most profoundly—the owner and watcher of a television can control his viewing and exercise his judgment about what he will watch.

Mr. Howarth: I understand the force of my hon. Friend's argument. He must accept that television is a different medium. As he said, it has an on-off switch, but the fact is that 50 per cent. of households have video recorders. Although the stuff may be put on after the watershed, nevertheless, the kind of material that I have been talking about—particularly the Red Triangle stuff that is put out by Channel 4—is videoed by adults. They may go to parties or retire early and leave the video running. Their children may pick up the video in the morning and use it. It is no good my hon. Friend saying that we have no responsibility. I know that parents have responsibilities. Television authorities know that parents have responsibilities. But even television authorities accept that, despite parents' responsibilities, they, too, have a profound responsibility. That is why they have produced the guidelines. If they did not believe that they had any influence or responsibility, they would not have produced the guidelines.

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Howarth: I shall not give way. I must press on. The hon. Lady can make her speech in her own time. If she had been more courteous to me earlier, perhaps she might have got a look in.

As the BBC's new guidelines on violence claim, television goes straight into the homes of all kinds of people. I must advance that argument to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). The BBC says in its guidelines:

"We also know from audience research that there is a general audience for all programmes. It is never the case that only a targeted group of users is watching. Common politeness"—

that is an old-fashioned expression and one that I welcome—

[Mr. Howarth]

"dictates that we always bear those other, chance viewers in mind. This does not and should not mean that programmes deal only with what is acceptable to all."

Television authorities recognise that they are different from cinema authorities. Cinema people have rightly made that point. They control their audiences. They do not admit under 18-years-olds to films that have an 18 certificate. Television cannot do that. The point about late night videos is that an 18 film can be put on after the watershed, it can be videoed, and children can see it in the morning because their parents are perhaps irresponsible.

Mr. Brinton: I was accused of playing foul by asking my hon. Friend about foul language. Has he assessed — he owes it to the House to do so — how much of the present television schedules would remain if his Bill were to become an Act?

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend has missed the point. People are concerned about what is shown on the box. That is why, last year, for the first time in 30 years Parliament considered bringing broadcasting within the scope of the Obscene Publications Act 1959. Parliament does not believe that broadcasters have always exercised their judgment properly. The boundaries are being pushed forward year by year. There is more and more foul language. It may be that today's programmes will be caught. I do not seek to be a censor, unlike Mr. Grade, who is a censor, as he tells me every day of the week. According to a report in today's edition of *The Times*, he said:

"Broadcasters daily make responsible decisions on what to transmit based on guidelines born of experience."

Broadcasters are the judges. They do not like the idea that their judgment should be criticised by somebody else and that they should be subject to the law of the land like every other medium in the country. It is perhaps because broadcasters have let these things go on that they have been pressed by scriptwriters and so on to go further and further. They are not following public opinion; they are seeking to lead it.

Mr. Dubs: So that all hon. Members can understand the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's argument, I put this to him: he said that because young children have access to videos — that is not in dispute — in effect they can watch programmes no matter how late at night they are shown, and therefore broadcasters should take note of the likelihood that young children may watch any programme no matter how late it is broadcast. Does the hon. Gentleman, in effect, say that nothing should be shown on television that is not suitable for the youngest children? If he says that, the thrust of his argument has wide implications for a society in which adults watch the media.

Mr. Howarth: I do not say that, although the hon. Gentleman has made a fair point. We must recognise something that has not been recognised until now, and that is that the on-off switch is not the determinant factor. The widespread availability of video recorders has changed matters. In a sense, they have slightly overtaken broadcasting authorities. I am not sure that they know how to deal with that. I do not say that everything should be suitable for playschool children or anything like that. That is not the point. *[Interruption.]* The gist of my argument is that broadcasting should be encompassed within the general law of the land, from which, at the moment, it enjoys a special exemption. In the final analysis, such matters should be tested not by me or by Mr. Grade, but by the British people——

Mr. Mikardo: In the courts.

Mr. Howarth: They should be tested in a court of law, in which 12 randomly chosen men and true——

Ms. Clare Short: Men again.

Mr. Howarth: ——twelve randomly chosen men and ladies can decide such matters.

I am aware that news broadcasting causes special problems. That is recognised by the latest guidelines produced by the BBC, which state:

"News editors and producers are regularly confronted by incidents and stories of great horror"—

such as in Lebanon—

"which they have to describe and interpret at speed. They must do so in the knowledge that there is increasing public awareness and concern about violence in the news and increasing sensitivity about the plight of those who suffer, whether in Britain or abroad."

The guidelines make this further valid point:

"The more often viewers are shocked the more it will take to shock them."

Broadcasters recognise their responsibilities. I do not think that the news warrants some of the criticism that has been levelled at other programmes, although increasingly, in some broadcasts, the camera is getting closer to the body that is being shown. One wonders whether there will be yet more explicit scenes following great tragedies.

I have spoken for some time, and I am conscious of the fact that other hon. Members want to intervene, so I shall conclude. The Bill does two things. First, it provides a more up-to-date test of obscenity by producing a definition capable of moving with changing social values and views of what is acceptable and what is not. That is the right way to proceed, given that an increasing amount of filth is available on bookstalls, at stations, and so on. Secondly, the Bill brings broadcasters within the scope of the general law of the land. I do not believe that any responsible broadcaster has anything to fear from the Bill. If the guidelines that I have set out to the House at some length, because I think that they are acceptable to all hon. Members as an exposition of what we expect from television, are enforced, broadcasters will have nothing to fear. They will not be subject to vexatious litigation. They know that action can be brought only with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions or by him. I do not like the principle that the Director of Public Prosecutions should stand between the people and the law of the land. That is not a sound principle of law, but one must provide some kind of protection against vexatious litigation. Therefore, reluctantly, I am prepared to accept that idea.

I hope the House will take the view that, in this new era in which AIDS has become of such great concern, it is odd that the Government are spending £20 million on AIDS advertising to point out the dangers of a particular way of life, yet those advertisements are often sandwiched between programmes which show people hopping into and out of bed with one another and whose moral values are at least questionable. I say that because people are beginning to make that important point. I hope, for all the reasons that I have given, that the House will support this modest measure.

10.23 am

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): We are again traversing unfamiliar ground. The difference is that this legislation is being considered at a time when there has been an almighty assault on the broadcasting authorities. This is not an isolated phenomenon, because it has occurred in America during the past decade, with the combination of the moral majority and the Right-wing attitudes to political, economic and philosophical thinking. We are seeing it again in relation to the Bill.

There is another characteristic of these events. Bills are introduced, yet before consideration is even a quarter under way, the sponsors are beginning to say, "We know that it is bad. We are ready to accept amendments." That is exactly what has happened with the Bill. Part of the argument put by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) contradicted the Bill on a crucial matter—whether a play, film or documentary should be considered in its entirety or whether its purpose should be considered. He argued his case for some time. But the Bill is concerned with isolated episodes, as the hon. Gentleman revealed with his example from "The Singing Detective".

It is no use introducing a Bill and trying to make the best of two contradictory arguments. The hon. Gentleman should make up his mind. He pointed out the number of "bloodys" in "The Singing Detective" as being somehow offensive. There were those who attacked the programme because bare buttocks were shown in a sex scene. It was extremely important to show that the child in the programme had been affected by watching that event. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's argument in defence of the Bill—that a film should be taken in its entirety—falls.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood cannot be dishonest with the House in this way, nor can he ask hon. Members to accept that a fundamental argument against the Bill—that a film, for example, should be taken in its entirety—can be left for consideration in Committee. No one knows what will happen in Committee. There is the famous court martial case in which the death penalty was imposed by a lower court, which expected it to be overturned on appeal. The appeal went all the way to the Court of Appeal, and then it was found that the final arbiter did not have the power to alter the decision. The hon. Gentleman cannot say, "I know that my Bill is lousy. I know that it is broken-backed and that there is a fundamental fault in it, but pass it because it can be changed in Committee."

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Ms. Clare Short: My hon. Friend should not give way.

Mr. Buchan: Of course I shall give way. The Labour party believes in argument.

Mr. Howarth: I did not say that the Bill was lousy. It is an excellent Bill. I said that a contextual element in it must be taken into account. To avoid doubt, and in view of representations, I am prepared to look at it again.

On Second Reading of the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) said that he was concerned about the drip technique of porn and violence, yet he voted against the Bill. It sounds as though he will vote against this Bill. Where does the hon. Gentleman stand on this matter?

Mr. Buchan: This is not my Bill. The hon. Gentleman should deal with his own defence instead of attacking me. *[Interruption.]* I am happy to answer the question, but have hon. Members forgotten that it is the hon. Gentleman's Bill and that questions are being put to him? Even in his intervention, the hon. Gentleman was saying, "Of course I am prepared to consider the whole contextual situation." If he says that he will look at the Bill further, he either knows that the Bill's central thesis is fundamentally flawed or is saying, "I shall consider it, but really I will not". The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Mikardo: Is not the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) saying, "Give the Bill a Second Reading, so that in Committee I can get a Bill that is totally different"?

Mr. Buchan: We have traversed this ground before. That is what happened a year ago with the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill. That Bill was considered in Committee and an entirely different Bill was proposed. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has a copy of it. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood wants the Bill to be given a Second Reading, then he wants it to be considered in Committee and totally changed. The House is entitled to know what is happening.

Mr. Howarth: If that is the case, is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Government propose Bills from the Dispatch Box and that on Second Reading they do not say that certain items can be looked at in Committee?

Mr. Buchan: We are saying that a different Bill is being suggested. Once the hon. Gentleman does that he is reverting to what already exists in the legislation—that the whole context must be taken into consideration. That is not what the Bill fundamentally says. If the hon. Gentleman is now saying that, he had better withdraw and be honest with the House, his supporters and the country.

Ms. Clare Short: Clearly, it was confusing when the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) said that he thought that context was important, which was one of the objections to the Bill as drafted. If I understood the hon. Gentleman correctly—it was impossible to get clarification because he would not give way very often in his speech—he meant that it would be possible, with regard to broadcasting, to look at the output of a day or week and deal with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) about the drip effect of violence. The point that he made seemed to be a new one. No longer are we talking about individual programmes or offerings being considered as unacceptable. The extension that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood was talking about would cover a day or a week's output, so that a cumulative objection should be looked for and action could then be taken. I think that the hon. Gentleman made that point in relation to my hon. Friend's previous point about the drip effect of violence.

Mr. Buchan: My hon. Friend has made an interesting point which illuminates the fundamental flaw in the Bill.

[Mr. Buchan]

What we had been talking about was the careless use of violence, usually with secondary programmes—not the ones that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood has given as examples. The hon. Gentleman is now saying that individual aspects of that can be considered. The hon. Gentleman's thinking is pretty weak, and we are entitled to a little sterner thought than we are receiving.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood referred to one "bloody". I do not know where the hon. Gentleman has lived; he has not been living in Britain for the past 30 or 40 years. The word is now used as an intensitive and can be heard everywhere. Another word is used as a common intensitive rather than its popular use. If the hon. Gentleman wants an example, the obvious one is from the Scottish play, "Macbeth":

"What bloody man is that?"

Will that be banned because of that isolated episode, or will it be taken in its context?

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Silly man.

Mr. Buchan: I am not being silly. The word "bloody" is continually used as an intensitive; that is what it has now degenerated into, because that is what has happened to language throughout history. Shakespeare used it correctly, he was a "bloody man". One thinks of "Ruddigore" and the problems that W.S.Gilbert faced at that time. The word has lost its significance. Language changes. It must not be taken as a fixed item. It changes as it gets absorbed into the total context.

Take the question of rape. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood says that rapes should not be shown. I can think of one of the most respectable of broadcasting series. "The Forsyte Saga". The rape scene was very important; it was a husband and wife rape scene, so perhaps the hon. Gentleman thinks because they happened to be married that exonerates it. It made it infinitely worse because they were married. It said something about the relationship between the couple, about the character of the woman and about the character of the man, and it illuminated a human understanding. The hon. Gentleman fails to understand that art is not merely to titillate and entertain—art says something. When a scene such as that in "The Singing Detective" is used, it is intentional. The defence of intention does not come into the Bill. It is the act and detail that comes in, not the aim and purpose any more than the totality. Those are the two fundamental flaws.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that what a reasonable man would regard as grossly offensive would be described as art? The cases put forward in the last Bill of the instances which would be caught under that Bill demonstrate that the hon. Gentleman is talking through his hat.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Gentleman speaks with ease about a "reasonable man", and what is gross and offensive. It would take us a week to analyse and decide the nature of a reasonable man. One remembers the scene in the Bernard Shaw play, "Major Barbara". We are talking about the concept of a reasonable man, not about a man setting fire to a house, or what action may follow the behaviour of a reasonable man, but a reasonable man in terms of thoughts and conceptions. That is a very difficult matter to define. *[Interruption.]* I have been generous, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I should at least be allowed a little time. We are trying to define a reasonable man and I was talking about the scene in "Major Barbara" when his old armaments manufacturer's son says to his mother, "I may not understand this, but I know the difference between right and wrong." This problem has puzzled philosophers, yet the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) knows the difference between right and wrong. He can define a reasonable man in the context of poem or song——

Mr. Cash: A jury can.

Mr. Buchan: A jury has to decide whether a man is reasonable?

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): The hon. Gentleman knows that I have considerable respect for him. He is a man of considerable intellectual sophistication. He should help us by addressing his mind to the proposal that we are debating rather than one of his wilder imaginings. I shall make two points in this context. First, before he assaults the concept of the reasonable man, will he consider that the framework of English law and many of the tests which bear on the manner in which people behave towards one another in our society have, for centuries, been based on the objective test of the reasonable man?

Secondly, may I direct the hon. Gentleman to an even more profound point. The hon. Gentleman seems to imagine that "grossly offensive" to reasonable people is something which has sprung fully-armed from the fevered brow of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). The Williams committee, which consisted of such embittered Right wingers as Professor Williams, made a proposal that material that was offensive to reasonable people — not grossly offensive, merely offensive to reasonable people — should be available only in something akin to a licensed sex shop. When the hon. Gentleman talks about something being grossly offensive to reasonable people, will he not grossly offend reasonable people by pretending that matters such as Shaw's "Major Barbara" and Shakespeare's "Macbeth" are in any sense affected by the Bill?

Mr. Buchan: I was not using Shakespeare's "Macbeth" or Shaw's "Major Barbara" for any purpose other than for a couple of quotations—the word "bloody", and to distinguish between right and wrong. It was nothing to do with the Bill.

The concept of the reasonable man is the kernel of much of our law. There is a difference between a jury being asked to decide what a reasonable man would think about a line of poetry, a picture or a play, and a jury being asked to decide what a reasonable man might decide would be the consequences of his actions. One remembers the famous case of the man who set fire to a house. The question was whether a reasonable man might deduce that deaths may flow from that action, making it a murder case. I remember the case vividly. That is a different question. If Conservative Members want an example I can think of one—the metaphysical poems—

"Licence my roving hands, and let them go".

I shall not continue because I may offend someone, but that was written by the Dean of St. Paul's, a good and noble priest.

I turn to the word "gross." This is a qualitative term about which I am not clear. That is why Professor

Williams had more sense than to use the word gross in his report. He used the word "offensive" in a different context from the one with which we are dealing. "Grossly offensive?" How long is a piece of string? What jury will decide what is gross and what is not?

That point is important. It means that the broadcaster, the writer or the producer does not know whether his material will be gross or not. He may mean it to offend. Half of our civilisation consists of offending people. I hope that I have just offended Conservative Members, because I intend to be offensive to the promoter of a Bill that is wrong and stupid. However, while I hope that what I have said is grossly offensive to him, I do not think that I should get arrested for that. Half the purpose of art is to shock and offend, because if it does not, I am not sure what the function of a painting, a poem, a play or a film is. Apparently, Conservative Members believe that it is only to entertain. I think that it is to offend and to shock.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Buchan: Before this great intellectual of the Conservative party interrupts, let me make one more point. I can think of the grossly offensive scene in Oedipus Rex. Do we want to ban Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles? What about the great howl that Olivier gave when the eye was gouged out in a welter of blood in "King Lear"? Will that be banned as being grossly offensive? It is grossly offensive, just as I can be grossly offensive, but if such things do not shock and offend, they are not worth having.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Buchan: I will give way to the leader of thought.

Mr. Dickens: Has the hon. Gentleman considered what the problem is today? On one hand we have a country in which violent and sexual crimes are rising, while on the other we have television channels daily screening programmes showing sex and violence. Many of us, and many of the general public, believe that that has resulted in a tremendous rise in violence and sexual crime. We are simply, on behalf of the general public, endeavouring to roll back the frontiers to bring this to an end. If television can have such an impact on advertising and selling products, it must also have an impact on the minds of people. This is what is concerning us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be helpful to the debate if hon. Members saved their speeches until they were called by the Chair instead of making them during interventions.

Mr. Buchan: I am not sure that I understand, because the common assumption is that this is the problem with which we are dealing. I will grant the hon. Gentleman that, and I will accept that two and two make four and that broadcasting affects people, and that all of us are anxious about aspects of broadcasting and newspapers. It does not seem to worry him, although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) has shown, it worries some of us, that Murdoch, Maxwell, Stevenson and others can live by selling titillation. However, Conservative Members are using this as an argument to thwart the decent part of offensive expression. I believe that what is said matters more than the hon. Gentleman understands. I have given my life to trying to defend the concept of the importance of the arts, including broadcasting, as the hon. Gentleman should know.

Of course I am anxious about this when I see broadcasting misused in the way that the hon. Gentleman described. However, it is his party, despite its flaunting of its moral position, which seeks to hand over television to the private entrepreneur. It is not the bloke next door, the moral preacher, or the Dean of St. Paul's who will set up satellite broadcasting—it is Maxwell and Murdoch, who have bought it. The people whom the hon. Gentleman is criticising are those who are the next stage in television and broadcasting. The Tory Government are handing over to these people, without control or regulation, the future of television and broadcasting. The Home Secretary, despite his initial anxiety about the Peacock report——

Mr. Dickens: What does this matter?

Mr. Buchan: It matters a great deal. We are handing broadcasting over to the entrepreneurs and they will operate not from this country but from abroad. It is these people who have produced the daily pornography in the papers.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Buchan: This is a pleasure. To whom shall I give way? Shall we have a vote as to whether I shall give way to this apostle of free enterprise or this bold figure before me? I give way to the guy at the back.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I find myself in agreement with the hon. Gentleman. He is right to point out that broadcasting will develop through satellites and through other people coming into the market place. However, does he not think that there should be regulation within the market place, as we do? Surely he should be supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) in his attempt to do something to control the system.

Mr. Bill Walker: I regularly read the hon. Gentleman's columns in the Scottish press. Is he suggesting that, because he writes for a newspaper that is owned by a private sector enterprise, there is something wrong with that?

Mr. Buchan: I wish that the hon. Gentleman read my columns more often, but I do not get into the newspapers as much as I would like. I only wish that I had a regular column. I have forgotten the initial point made by the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth).

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is important that the hon. Gentleman should see this point because it may encourage him to go through the Lobby in support of the Bill——

Mr. Buchan: I remember the point. It is whether I am in favour of the regulation of broadcasting. It is curious that this Tory party, which has declared that it is in favour of freedom of the market place, is also the party that wants the exact reverse when it comes to freedom of expression. It wants freeing-up for the entrepreneur, and it wants to hand over the development of technology in broadcasting so that the entrepreneur can make money by appealing to

[Mr. Buchan]

below the lowest common denominator. The only aspect that it sees in terms of regulatory powers over broadcasting is when it comes to repression of ideas. It sees a combination of freedom for the uncaring entrepreneur with repression of ideas.

We believe that regulation should be used not as a repressive measure but to ensure a diversity of programmes. The regulatory powers in broadcasting, through the IBA, the Broadcasting Act and the charter and the licensing agreement open up broadcasting and give diversity. The Conservative party is moving rapidly towards freeing television to the market place while at the same time introducing crippling regulation to prevent freedom of expression.

Mr. Mellor: I am giving the hon. Gentleman the credit of listening to his argument, even if I cannot accept it. Is the philosophy that he wishes to put before the country that people should be free to broadcast material that is grossly offensive to a reasonable man. Why cannot he grasp the self-evident proposition, as the Williams report made clear when advocating a much lower test, that there is plenty of room for diversity in an adult and mature society without producing such material?

Mr. Buchan: It is because of this that I accept the guidelines in broadcasting, and agree that the red triangle is a sensible suggestion. Because I accept that, I am defending the broadcasters against this Bill. The Bill does not try to give protection against what I believe the Minister might regard as grossly offensive. It has a vague definition which, of itself, will inhibit the freedom of the broadcaster because he will not know how the material will be treated. He will have no means of knowing whether that which he broadcasts intending to shock and to make a moral point might not be seen by a reasonable busybody who will object to it. He will find himself hauled in front of the court time after time.

The parallel of that is the attacks made by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the freedom of broadcasting in documentaries and news broadcasts. I can give an example of how this operates. Two years ago, when "Real Lives" was to be shown, the broadcasting authority held out against interference. The Home Secretary had to intervene — to interfere — by writing to the governors before "Real Lives" was banned. There followed two years of continual attacks upon the freedom of broadcasting, and in particular the freedom of the BBC, especially by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Then Duncan Campbell wrote his piece in the *New Statesman* about Zircon and the "Secret Society" programme, and the BBC itself intervened to ban it.

After those two years of pressure, the BBC had been pushed back to the extent that it was scared to resist that pressure. There are parallels in this Bill; it is attempting to bring about those circumstances again. The broadcaster will be inhibited: he will not know whether he can take risks to tell the truth as he knows it. The makers of programmes such as "The Singing Detective" will be afraid to make not just one particular scene, but others as well. That is what happens when such legislation is introduced. Broadcasters become inhibited and are forced to retreat, because they do not know how a judge will direct the jury on the test of a "reasonable man" and what is gross and offensive. It is a function of art to offend and to shock.

Ms. Clare Short: The definition of what is grossly offensive to a reasonable person is clearly an important point. The Minister may believe that that is a fair test, but I find it very worrying.

I saw a programme on television which discussed the portrayal of killings in South Africa in a television news programme. It debated how the vile killings of children should be portrayed. Clearly, it was a news item; but how close should the camera get to the bodies, for instance? Some felt that to show the dead children was grossly offensive. I do not agree with the Minister that it is a simple test. The gouging out of King Lear's eyes can be portrayed in a grossly offensive way, and perhaps it should be.

Mr. Mellor: Is it grossly offensive to reasonable people?

Ms. Short: There is room for serious argument here. The Minister should not dismiss the point; it is one of the crunch points in the Bill. The definition could exclude important news reporting and real artistic expressions of freedom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members' speeches should be consecutive rather than concurrent.

Ms. Short: The Minister was intervening on my intervention. He was heckling me.

Mr. Buchan: I dread to ask where I have got to, but I shall do my best.

I think that we have exposed sufficiently the problem faced by the Bill's promoter — that his Bill does not make sense. It can be used only to prevent and terrorise; it is not the kind of measure on which a broadcaster can act knowing that if his case comes to the court he will receive a fair deal.

One of the main problems is the shift in the definition of what is objectionable. The merit of the product is not brought into consideration. Clause 4(1) brings in the question of the public good, but it does not open it up to the same extent as the original 1959 Act, which allows a defence to be made on the grounds of merit. The objection is to the effect that the test will have in authorising police and prosecution action, in itself preventing the broadcaster from taking risks that he should take. It is not really a question of the simple titillation of pornography. If it were, my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood would be right to say that we should be considering the daily "sex object" aspect typified by page 3 of the popular press.

We must know before the day is out whether the Bill's promoter has consulted his colleagues on whether to change the Bill in Committee, because we must know with which Bill we shall be dealing, and whether it will repeat the fundamental aspect of the totality of the product being seen, rather than the individual items. We need clarity on that, or we cannot proceed to Committee. We also need to know to what extent the defence of the public good can be extended to allow expert witnesses to participate.

I can only repeat, perhaps in a slightly different way, that the real worry is about the proliferation of the actions of Conservative Members seeking to inhibit broadcasters. They have used the moral arguments to try to thwart and cripple the freedom of the broadcaster in a way that is paralleled by what has happened on the political front.

The matter cannot be isolated from the future of broadcasting. Sadly, if the Government succeed in obtaining another term, radio and, especially television, will suffer. A Green Paper suggests the removal of regulatory powers that enable diversity of opinion and broadcasting freedom along with guidelines. Broadcasting will be handed over to an infinitely worse obscenity—the use of marvellous technology for the crude purpose of making profits. The person who will be hurt will not be the entrepreneur, who will use it to flog his product; it will be the serious broadcaster with something to say. When a man has something to say, he should be grossly offensive. For many people, the whole aim and purpose of art is to shock. If it does not, it has failed in any purpose that could justify it.

10.56 am

Sir Carol Mather (Esher): What I have to say is not particularly new—it has all been said before—but I think that it bears being said once more, especially as I have been sitting here silent for so many years.

I support the Bill because I think that there is too much violence on television. It is not the job of television to go as far as it feels an audience can take, pushing the frontiers ever onward. By the same token, standards are not a moving target. They must relate to what is right and what is wrong. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) said this week, a judge told a jury that it must decide what is honest and what is dishonest. In the same way, every television producer, manager or governor knows what is right and what is wrong.

Children love to see the sort of violence that takes place in Punch and Judy shows. However, there is a big difference between that sort of fun and the cold-blooded violence that we see on the television screen, where there is a degree of offensivenesss that cannot but deprave and sicken the beholder, removing the sense of right and wrong and leading to the sort of copycat actions about which we hear so much.

I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Harrison) has left the Chamber. He and I, and my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen), were trained during the war to commit acts of violence against an enemy, but there is a difference between that kind of violence and what we see on the screen, because of the completely different motives involved. In war, the good subsumes the evil.

There have been many studies on the effects of violence on young people. I shall give two examples. The first is the report in which Eric Moonman wrote about copycat hooligans. He said:

"The influence of television on their response"—

he was referring to young people in Toxteth—

"to the situation could not be doubted—TV made it look easy, they new what kind of things to do."

Secondly, on 29 June 1985 the *Daily Telegraph* quoted statistics from a study by the National Coalition on Television Violence in America. It said:

"Between the ages of two and 11, the typical American child spends 27·3 hours a week in front of the box. By the age of 16, the grand total will be about 20,000 hours. If programming stays the way it is now . . . the American teenager will have witnessed 200,000 acts of violence and 50,000 attempted murders by his 16th birthday. If there is cable television in the house the figures will be even higher."

Those statistics are horrific and they could be applied to this country.

I do not feel sorry for the victims of violence whom we see on the television screen. I feel sorry for the watchers, particularly the very young, whose senses are being bludgeoned and whose dignity is being trampled upon.

11.1 am

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): It is clear from the debate so far that there are substantial differences of view about the Bill. Those differences cut across party lines. It is entirely proper that that should be so in respect of a private Member's Bill, since it is not Government legislation. As further sharp differences will be expressed during the debate, I shall begin my speech by making at least one point on which we can all agree. It is that the present legislation is not entirely satisfactory. The sharpest evidence in favour of that contention is the fact that the present legislation has led to so much litigation.

It was said earlier that juries would settle the matter, but I have always felt that when we as Members of Parliament legislate we should ensure, as far as we humanly can, that the legislation is so clear that it will be unnecessary for people to have to go to court to find out what it means. If legislation is passed that contains phraseology that can be interpreted in two different ways, that is evidence, to me, of Parliament's failure to legislate clearly. Every time somebody has to go to court because different views are taken about the legislation that Parliament has passed, that is a black mark against us.

Furthermore, we should not pass defective legislation and then rely on the good sense of the prosecuting authorities to decide what is and what is not to be prosecuted. That makes the Director of Public Prosecutions, or, since he cannot consider every case himself, a lawyer in his office, the judge of what the law is. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) suggested that ordinary people are reasonable, as the Minister of State himself said. Incidentally, I notice how different is the Minister's approach to this Bill from his approach last year. Perhaps that is because there is soon to be a general election.

Mr. Mellor: That is an unworthy suggestion, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should make it. I made it very clear last time that my objection to the Bill was based on the list approach. If people wish to take issue with the concept of

"grossly offensive to reasonable people",

they should realise how strong a test it is and also that a milder test was proposed by the Williams committee. Whatever else it was, that committee was not a collection of Monday Club supporters. I am changing my view in accordance with the change in what is being presented to the House. I suspect that the Opposition are not doing the same.

Mr. Mikardo: That is unworthy, too. If I have said something that impugns the Minister's integrity, of course I apologise for it absolutely and unreservedly. I shall deal later with the concept of the reasonable person and why something may be grossly offensive. The problem is that it is subjective; one man's meat is another man's entrecote maitre d'hotel. The difference is in taste—de gustibus non est disputandum. The test that one jury may apply may be utterly different from the test that is applied by another jury in a different court, or even in the same court. Hard decisions are left to people's objective judgment.

[Mr. Mikardo]

I am sure that every hon. Member is strongly opposed to the gratuitous display of prurient sex and sadistic violence. To be opposed to that is easy. It is within the intellectual competence of even the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). That means that it is within the competence of almost anybody in the whole wide world. But what is not easy, and what is thunderingly difficult — dear me, I almost said "bloody difficult" and I should not say that, should I? —is to legislate against the kind of abuse that we all oppose with a degree of discrimination and precision that successfully avoids the creation of both intolerable anomalies and highly undesirable side effects and spin-offs.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood was right to say that there are no simple black and white solutions. We are not arguing as between people, some of whom have one sort of intention, and others who have another sort of intention. The argument between the supporters and the opponents of the Bill is not about whether it is desirable to get rid of scenes of gratuitous, prurient sex and sadistic violence, but about whether the Bill is the right way to go about it. We are not talking about ends; we are talking about means.

It is because I recognise that the present law is far from satisfactory that I voted in the last Session for the Second Reading of the Bill that was introduced by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). I notice that the hon. Member for Davyhulme is not here today. Perhaps that is because his experience has reconciled him to the belief that it is an abortive exercise anyway. However, I voted for the Bill on Second Reading, even though I thought that in parts its wording was grossly defective and, indeed, in one part ludicrous. One may ask why I voted for a Bill when I thought that its wording was defective. The answer is that I had hoped that during the proceedings in Committee we would sort out the imperfections.

The Committee was strong in supporters and opponents of the hon. Gentleman's Bill and the Minister may recall how hard it worked. I had hoped that while kicking the Bill around we would be able to get rid of the manifest difficulties and perhaps arrive at some sort of formulation that would get over the imperfections of the present law without creating anomalies or undesirable spin-offs. Unfortunately, my hope was not fulfilled. What happened? The hon. Member for Davyhulme rewrote his Bill, not once, but twice. We started with a Bill based on what came to be known as the "laundry list", as the Minister will recall. The hon. Gentleman then abandoned that and changed the Bill radically so that it was a different Bill. We found during debates in Committee—very good debates, if I may say so—that that Bill would not do either. The hon. Member for Davyhulme himself recognised that that would not do. Therefore, he rewrote it again and we had a third Bill. In the end, the House decided, rightly, that even that third Bill would not do. If the hon. Gentleman's Bill was defective, as it proved to be, this one is even more seriously flawed.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Does my hon. Friend recall that not only did we have a third Bill that came back to the House, but that the hon. Member for Davyhulme then proceeded to accept every amendment that had been tabled which would, of course, have changed it a fourth time?

Mr. Mikardo: I had forgotten that, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me. The hon. Member for Davyhulme said that he was willing to accept all the amendments. However, my hon. Friend is wrong in saying that it would have produced a fourth Bill, because accepting all the amendments would have produced a non-Bill, in that it would have taken all the content out of it.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): What the hon. Gentleman has explained to the House shows the difficulty of creating a Bill of this nature. I appreciate that he has put forward and illustrated the problems of the past. Would he give us an idea of what he would propose in order to introduce some sensible control over broadcasting on the side of arbitration of taste, which is what this is really about? Will he say how he would develop that, because I am sure that many Conservative Members would be interested to hear it?

Mr. Mikardo: That is a perfectly fair question and it deserves a proper answer. During the course of my observations I shall give a proper answer.

I said that the Bill is much more seriously flawed than the measure that we considered last year. I must justify that, because it is a strong statement. I justify it on the basis of no fewer than 16 grounds, which I shall list briefly.

The first ground is that, among other things, it goes back to the laundry list which the hon. Member for Davyhulme—[Hon. Members: "Oh, no."] Yes, it does. I do not know why anybody says, "Oh, no." There is no subsection (2) to clause 1. Has anyone noticed that? It goes from subsection (1) to subsection (3), but I presume that the passage beginning at line 14 is supposed to be subsection (2). If I take that as being so, how can anybody seriously argue that subsection (2)(a), which lists (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v), is not a laundry list?

Mr. Mellor *rose—*

Mr. Mikardo: Hold on a minute. I am waiting to hear the Minister's argument.

It is true that it is a different laundry list from that of the hon. Member for Davyhulme. This is all underwear, instead of outer wear, but it is certainly a laundry list.

Mr. Mellor: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but it is only because I enjoy his contributions and want to take his argument seriously. The laundry list to which I objected every bit as profoundly, although perhaps not as eloquently, as did the hon. Gentleman is wrong because it sought to say that merely by looking at a list one could say what should or should not be obscene. This is not a laundry list in that sense. They are words of restriction on a test that suggests that material to be excluded has to be "grossly offensive" to reasonable people. If the hon. Gentleman wants the pedigree of that approach, it is to be found in paragraph 9.31 of the Williams report where it explicitly says that the notion of offensiveness needs to be qualified by reference to certain things. Therefore, it is not a laundry list as such. I hope that we can at least agree on that.

Mr. Mikardo: During interventions the Minister has twice mentioned the Williams report. There is much in that report with which I strongly disagree, and much that is of value. However, it is not written on tablets of stone handed

down from Mount Sinai. I do not consider that in giving my thought to the merit or demerit of a Bill before the House I am bound to make my judgment solely on the basis of what the Williams report said.

Mr. Mellor: All I am trying to get across to the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, so that we might use the time profitably, is that we should at least agree that whatever may be the demerits of the Bill, it is not something that has come merely from an isolated Right-wing faction on the Conservative Benches that is supportive of Mrs. Whitehouse and thinks of nothing else. Let us at least be clear that, whether or not the Bill is to be rejected, it has to be rejected on the basis that a number of people, well outside the ranks of the Conservative party, have from time to time considered that the test it is replacing is useless—that is the description applied by the Williams report—and that something along those lines would be better. At least we would then have a better debate.

Mr. Mikardo: I am grateful to the Minister. I know that he is trying to be helpful, but I am bound to say that the good intentions that he has in his interventions follow the road to which we know good intentions lead. The hon. Gentleman's performance is not up to his good will. He is not being helpful at all. I did not say anything about the Bill coming from some outrageous rabid Right-wing lot. It is my practice to judge issues, not on their origins, but on their merits.

The Minister has tempted me to digress. One of the troubles with politicians of all parties is that they are sometimes a bit prone to judge an issue on where it comes from rather than on its merits. I remember Arthur Deakin once saying to me at a Labour party conference that if I moved a resolution saying that the sun shines by day and the moon shines by night he would have no hesitation in casting his block vote against it because I had moved it. I do not operate on that basis. I am trying to take a close look at the Bill. I have been burning the midnight oil. I went to bed at 3.10 this morning, after taking a close look at its merits and demerits. I hope that what I say will faithfully and honestly reflect a serious analysis of the Bill and nothing else.

Mr. Buchan: I think that the Minister was referring to the comments that I made. I said that the Bill could not be taken in isolation. It must be taken against the background of political attacks on broadcasting which is especially significant and dangerous. That is different from saying that the Bill is only some isolated Right-wing crude manifestation.

Mr. Mikardo: I agree. The Minister was putting up an Aunt Sally to knock down the argument.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I have no doubt that my hon. Friend's examination of the Bill is sincere and exhaustive, but I ask him not to abandon too lightly the theory that one should always look at the person who is moving the motion. Some of us were brought up on Ernest Bevin's dictum that one looked not at the wording of the motion but at the so-and-so who was moving it.

Mr. Mikardo: That is one of the many ways in which the late Mr. Ernest Bevin committed gross errors of judgment. There were many such errors.

The first of the 16 grounds on which I suggest that the Bill is more flawed than that of the hon. Member for Davyhulme is that it reproduces a laundry list that is not altogether dissimilar from the one that the hon. Gentleman and his supporters abandoned in the Committee on that Bill, because in debate they found that it was not practical and could not be implemented. So I ask myself whether we should burden a Standing Committee on this Bill with the fag of going through that abortive process all over again.

When I consider a private Member's Bill, I have it very much in mind that many others come after it. If we have a long Committee stage, as we had on the obscene publications Bill last year, to no effect at all, we are preventing other hon. Members in the ballot, some of whom have worthy Bills, from having the chance of proceeding with their Bills. That is the first of my grounds for saying how flawed the Bill is.

Mr. Cash: Both the hon. Gentleman and I sat on the Committee on the previous Bill. He said that it had no effect at all. Does he accept that there have been substantial changes in the guidelines as a result of what went on in that Committee, and that it did a great deal of good? We hope that this Bill will do even more.

Mr. Mikardo: The hon. Gentleman may be right, but he is only guessing. Of course there have been substantial changes in the guidelines, but the hon. Gentleman has no method of knowing—nor have I and nor has anybody else, except those who wrote the guidelines—to what extent those changes have been made as a result of the debate, in which the hon. Gentleman and I participated, on the previous obscene publications Bill. There is no effect that can be proven.

Secondly, the term "grossly offensive" is vague, indeterminate and subjective. It will be applied inconsistently according to the robustness of outlook of justices and juries in different courts in different parts of the country, or even in the same court. It involves subjective judgment. I have it in mind that only two days ago the House rejected, in the context of the word "evil", the idea of basing the law upon a subjective judgment on a word the definition of which was inevitably imprecise. Today we should not try to do something that the House said it did not want to do the other day.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I acknowledge the danger in the idea that the words "grossly offensive" may be subjective, but surely the hon. Gentleman will agree that the concept of "depravity" and "likely to deprave" is also subjective? The logic of his argument is to go right back to the beginning and say that all the obscene publications Acts should be repealed. Is that what he is saying?

Mr. Mikardo: I was asked a few moments ago what I thought should be done. I promised that I would say so before I finished my speech, and I repeat my promise. I am glad to give way, even on a repetitious question such as that. I hope that no one will complain about the length of my speech, which so far has been about three times as long as it would have been had there not been all those interventions.

My third point again concerns the question: how long is a piece of string? What is meant by "a reasonable person"? Are we talking about one reasonable person, a lot of reasonable persons, a majority of reasonable persons, or a person as reasonable, shall we say, as some

[Mr. Mikardo]

of the cranks who write a lot of letters to us? We all get them, do we not? They all think that they are reasonable, do they not? They do not think that they are cranks. We know that they are, but they do not. They all think that they are reasonable.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): There is no difficulty with that point. For example, the whole of the English law of negligence is based on the concept of reasonableness and the reasonable man. Individuals can take a different view of the reasonableness or otherwise of an action, but is the hon. Gentleman really saying that because we cannot provide a hard and fast rule, which everybody can accept, we should not have a law of negligence, just as he seems to be saying that there should be no law of censorship?

Mr. Mikardo: I am not saying that. I shall not be tempted to go too far in answering the hon. Gentleman, because I am not a lawyer. I do not want to talk about things that I have no competence or authority to talk about. I can only say that I read what seemed to me to be a learned piece the other day by a distinguished lawyer who argued that there is a difference between reasonableness in respect of a fact, such as negligence, and reasonableness in respect of perception. The Bill is about perception. Nothing is more indeterminate, vague and subjective than a perception. The very proverb that

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder"

is clear evidence of that.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): My hon. Friend says that he is looking for a definition of "a reasonable man." I am a barrister, and I cannot give it to him. However, the American definition of a "reasonable man" is the person who goes home at the weekend, takes off his jacket and mows the lawn. The British definition of a "a reasonable man" has been said hitherto to be the person who rides on the Clapham omnibus. The trouble with that is that there is no Clapham omnibus.

Mr. Mikardo: That is one trouble. The other trouble is that it excludes women from having any judgment at all. That is one of the problems with "a reasonable man".

There has been some discussion on my fourth point, notably in the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan). He referred to the whole concept. Under the Bill as drafted the makers of a film could be convicted on a single frame—a split second. It could be said to be "grossly offensive". The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood says not to worry about that, that one often makes amendments to Bills, and that he will amend this Bill to include the whole concept. That is not an amendment.

Mr. Buchan: Bill No. 2.

Mr. Mikardo: That is right. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood is seeking, as I ventured to say in an intervention, to persuade the House to vote today to give him leave to bring in a Bill that is different from this Bill. That is not just an amendment; it is a total rewriting of the Bill. It is going back to the experience last year, when a Bill was rewritten twice.

Mr. Mellor *rose*——

Mr. Mikardo: The Minister said that he would not do it again, but I am glad to give way.

Mr. Mellor: The sponsor of the Bill has gone off to address a more august audience than us on the Jimmy Young programme, so I must represent him. [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] The best legal advice that I have suggests that the item must be taken as a whole in the Bill as drafted. It is surely not rewriting the Bill to suggest that, in so far as there is any doubt in people's minds, those words could be added. The hon. Gentleman's point is not a terribly good one.

Mr. Mikardo: I am not a lawyer, and I shall not argue about the law with lawyers. I was surprised to hear what the Minister said in the intervention that he promised not to make.

The Bill specifically mentions items, and an item is not a thing taken as a whole. We do not want to repeat last year's experience of rewriting a Bill in Committee.

Fifthly, the new test does not allow the court to take into account the overall purpose and intent of a publication. For example, the makers of a film against the dangers of drug abuse may be convicted if a single scene is "grossly offensive", although the shock that it causes may be therapeutic and beneficial. The scene may have been put in deliberately for beneficial purposes.

Mr. Fisher: To deter.

Mr. Mikardo: The scene may be designed to deter people from taking drugs, but the film's makers can still be convicted on the basis of a single scene.

Sixthly, the new test does not require any viewer or reader to be grossly offended. A publisher, author or producer, or even a cameraman, can be charged and convicted even if no one has seen the material. The law could be applied by reference to a reasonable person's outrage at the very thought that a so-called shocking film was being shown privately to people who were not shocked by it. That is absolutely fantastic. In that respect, the Bill can be described only as a killjoy's charter.

Seventhly, the new test will convict persons not only for publications produced by them, but for

"any further publication that could reasonably be expected to follow".

In the somewhat convoluted logic of the Bill, a television producer could be convicted by a court that is grossly offended, not by the film being screened on Channel 4, but by the possibility of its being screened elsewhere at some other time.

My eighth point is that clause 2 gives the prosecution a wholly unfair advantage in being able to proceed at the same time on the old test and the new test. It specifically allows evidence which is admissible only on the first test, and which is rejected on that score by the jury, to be used to obtain a conviction for infringing the second. I am told by a lawyer that that position is unparalleled and unprecedented in our law. It is legislation that permits conviction on inadmissible evidence, and if that is not a legal defect I do not know what is.

Ninthly, in applying the obscenity law to television and radio, the Bill incriminates an extraordinarily wide range of persons employed by, or associated with, television companies. Responsibility for the production of a film or documentary that is allegedly grossly offensive may, on the ordinary principles of complicity, reach the boards and general managements of the IBA and the BBC. In addition, clause 3(2) provides that

"a person also publishes an article if the matter recorded on it is included by him in a television or sound broadcast."

The matter is included in the television or sound broadcast by the studio floor manager. It is included by the cameraman and by the sound recordist. The clause would make a large number of people liable to procedure and prison sentences.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is on the verge of an important point—the issue of a contractual relationship between the producers and, in the case of the IBA, the statutory authority or, in that of the BBC, the chartered body. I should be interested to see how the hon. Gentleman develops that point. The way in which the contract is drawn up and enforced needs careful examination.

Mr. Mikardo: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has a point, but I rest on what the Bill says, and particularly on the two words "by him". Anything inserted by anyone in the film or documentary makes him liable.

My tenth point is that clause 4(2) declares that any person who

"has an article in his ownership, possession or control with a view to the matter recorded on it being included in a television or sound broadcast"

is guilty of keeping an obscene article for gain if any part of it is regarded as grossly offensive. If one looks hard at that, it is objectionable for two reasons.

First, it treats television tapes and films with so-called offensive contents as if they were dangerous drugs that would incriminate anyone who possessed them even for a short period—such as the van driver, or the motorcycle courier who conveys the article in transit from one place to another. Such a person has it in his possession and control. He is taking it to be broadcast, and he certainly falls under the hammer of this part of the Bill.

The second objection to that phraseology is that, as a result of clause 1(1)*(b)*, it covers not only finished film that is ready to be broadcast or shown in the cinema, but unprocessed film and edited film. We all know that when film is being shot film makers shoot 15 times as much footage as will be used in the end product. They then edit it and leave bits out—because they are blurred, did not come out right or did not fit in. Great changes can be made and large lumps are always left out.

Under the Bill a person is guilty if he has the original rush even though nobody has had a chance to look at it for the purposes of selection and editing. Just imagine the problems that that will cause for film makers dealing with laboratories and editors. The problems will be endless. In this respect the Bill is a blunt instrument which fails to take into account editorial processes in which so-called grossly offensive material may be reduced or eliminated prior to transmission. We cannot stop a person from going to court to prevent the showing of a film that would not be in the least offensive when it came to be shown because some offensive passages would have been edited out. There is no defence on the part of the producer. He is liable if there is anything that a person thinks offensive in the original rush.

My eleventh point is that the Bill provides a defence if the accused can prove,

"that he did not know and had no reason to suspect"

that offensive matter would be included in a broadcast. That defence is largely ineffective, because, first, incredibly, it does not apply to the offence committed by possessing the tape or film prior to broadcasting. Therefore, it does not exculpate the motorcycle courier, the errand boy carrying the film. Secondly, it reverses the burden of proof in the case of material that has already been broadcast. We should all be concerned about that.

My twelfth point is that the Bill applies the public good defence to radio and television broadcasting. In a rather strange and curious way it applies only clause 4(1), which states the offence but does not apply clause 4(2), which permits experts to testify in support of the defence. This may be a mere oversight on the part of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, but it suggests that he is determined to ensure that no expert is ever allowed to testify for the defence in a case brought under his Bill.

My thirteenth point is that the Bill not only provides a new test which enormously broadens the area of the potentially obscene, but harnesses police powers in that broad area. We may well see reasonable policemen walking the beat in Charlotte street, which is the address of Channel 4, and in Shepherds Bush, which is the address of the BBC, empowered on occasion to enter the premises of the BBC or Channel 4 with obscenity warrants which entitle them to seize, if need be by force, not merely associated articles but any documents found on the premises which relate to a trade or business carried on at the premises.

If there is a complaint, a policeman can go into Television Centre and seize anything in the place, because there is nothing in that place that is not associated with the trade or business carried on in the premises. The police can seize anything, even if it does not have the least connection with the so-called grossly offensive item. They can seize all that is in the can for the next 20 issues of the EastEnders. I can put it another way. Even though there is not a complaint about a single item, we could go on having endless repeats of the farcical police raid on the Glasgow premises of the BBC in connection with the Zircon film.

One effect of all this would be a substantial increase in police time and public money devoted to detecting and prosecuting so-called gross offensiveness in films, books, magazines, videos, records and television studios. While the police are doing all that, they are using time that they could use to prevent people from being mugged or burgled and in apprehending the criminals who have committed those crimes.

My fourteenth point is that the Bill will create considerable problems for the existing film and video classification system. It will almost certainly mean the end of the 18R certificate category and will require further cuts in 18 category films to remove scenes to which a reasonable person, who might never choose to see the film in question, could conceivably take exception.

My penultimate point is that one very bad feature of the Bill is that it makes no provision for any right to jury trial. As I said earlier, there were a number of interventions from Conservative Members, who said that what I am saying may be right, but that it would sort itself out because juries are sensible. In the main juries are sensible and will see that no ridiculous things come about as a result of this Bill, but there is no right in the Bill to have a jury. The Director of Public Prosecutions, on his own say so, has discretion to proceed by way of a forfeiture summons in a local magistrates court, whereby a single stipendiary magistrate, or two or three plain justices, may order destruction of a film before it has been shown. There may be jury trials in some cases, but there is no guarantee of a jury trial. Hon. Members who support the Bill cannot rest on the argument that if there is any potential nonsense

[Mr. Mikardo]

My last point is all-important. It is obvious from the speeches and interventions that the Bill will require lots of legislation. It will be an absolute bonanza for lawyers and there will be a great deal of time wasting in the courts.

I have listed the objections to the Bill, and perhaps I may be allowed, without detaining the House for too long, to expand a little on a few of those objections.

I want to say a little more about the so-called gross offensiveness test. This focuses on what might really be called gut reaction. It focuses upon the instant response of shock or disgust to particular pictures, either visual or conjured up in words. The party to the action is described as a reasonable person, but that is merely a code for a tribunal that will decide the issue. A reasonable person will not decide; the magistrate or jury—if there is a jury trial—will decide, and the term "reasonable person" is really a code name for them. As judges and juries will, of course, always regard themselves as reasonable, they will test the material according to their own personal, subjective and immediate responses.

"Offensive" really means that an offence is being caused or that offence is taken, whether on grounds of morals, politics or aesthetics. I find some programmes on television offensive because they are not very well made. I find some offensive because they are boring. I told the Committee during discussions on the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill that the only item that I had seen that was mentioned throughout the proceedings was "Sebastiane". I said that that programme had no tendency to corrupt or deprave me, but had a very powerful tendency to bore the pants off me.

Mr. Cash: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the words

"of a grossly offensive character"

have been adjudicated on in the courts? Is he aware that the courts stated that those words

"must be calculated to wound the feelings, arouse anger, resentment, disgust or outrage in the mind of a reasonable man"?

That was stated in Malvern v. Bradbury.

Mr. Mikardo: Well, well. The courts are saying that "offensive" means anything that causes offence. That is what that message means. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think for a moment about that message. All that states is that anything is offensive if it causes offence. That does not take us much further.

There can be many definitions of the word "gross". I think that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood thinks that, in the context of the Bill, it means "extreme". "Gross" does not have to mean extreme. It can mean obvious. Therefore, something that is "grossly offensive" may not be "extremely offensive".

Mr. Nicholls: Surely the problems that the hon. Gentleman foresees will be taken care of by the fact that the DPP will have to give his sanction for a prosecution to take place. Presumably the hon. Gentleman does not think that the average DPP will be quite so lilly-livered as other members of the public.

Mr. Mikardo: The hon. Gentleman must have missed part of the debate. I have already dealt with that point in some detail.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is creating difficulties that do not exist. The proposal in the Bill tightens up the rules that exist at the moment. Section 4 (1)*(a)* of the Broadcasting Act 1981 applies to independent television. It contains an obligation on the authority to ensure that no programme is broadcast

"which offends against good taste or decency."

In its annex to the agreement and licence, the BBC accepts responsibility not to broadcast programmes

"which offend against good taste or decency."

That obligation is either already imposed by statute or is voluntarily accepted by the broadcasting institutions. It involves a test that is less stringent than that proposed in the Bill. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) does not welcome that tightening up of the law.

Mr. Mikardo: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's intervention. If he is saying that the proposal already exists and is implemented, why do we need fresh legislation? That is a very simple question. The plain fact is that the use of such a broad test cannot justify protecting citizens from gratuitous offence which they do not seek out. That is the key.

The mischief of the Bill is that it applies the concept to material which citizens choose to read or view and judges that in accordance with the artificial reaction of someone who does not choose to see or read it. In all friendliness, I say to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood that that is the basic defect in the Bill.

We can get some idea of the material that might be seized under the gross offensiveness definition from the practices of Customs and Excise officers. If we consider seizures under the prohibition against the importation of indecency, we can see how widely those officers interpret decency when they decide what to seize. Such seizures have included a vast array of homosexual literature. In the "Gay's the Word" case, the haul included novels by Gore Vidal, Jean Genet and Oscar Wilde. It included books warning against AIDS, books depicting the art of Rowlandson, Gillray, and Aubrey Beardsley, and a sex education manual promoted by the Unitarian Church. I do not know whether the Bill's supporters include any Unitarians. If so, they should think twice about the wickedness of the church of which they are members, which is a potential purveyor of material that would be considered grossly offensive under the Bill.

Those seizure proceedings serve as a warning that there will not necessarily be consistency in the approach of different courts, juries, policemen and lawyers in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

There is a famous obiter dictum of an American judge, William O. Douglas, in a gross offensiveness case. He was a very wise old chap, although sometimes he sounded world-weary. I suppose that someone who sits on the United States Supreme Court for some years is bound to get a little world-weary. He said:

"People are offended by many offerings made by merchants in this area. They are also offended by political pronouncements, sociological themes, and by stories of official misconduct. The list of activities and publications and pronouncements that affect someone is endless. Life in this crowded modern technological world creates many offensive statements and many offensive deeds . . . There are regimes in the world where ideas 'offensive' to the majority . . . are suppressed. There life proceeds at a monotonous speed. Most of us would find that world offensive. One of the most offensive experiences in my life was a visit to a nation where bookstalls were filled only with books on mathematics and books on religion."

In short, the test of gross offensiveness is far too vague and subjective to be a fair or proper criterion of guilt for an offence which carries a penalty of three years in gaol. This vague definition could ruin a man's career and land him in gaol for three years. It is clearly aimed at regulating and limiting artistic freedom.

A fundamental principle of criminal law is that it should be sufficiently certain to enable citizens to know what the law is and to regulate their conduct so as to avoid committing any crimes. The gross offensiveness test would fail completely to provide that necessary certainty and predictability.

Against my contention it may be urged that the laundry list, set out in paragraph *(a)* of what I imagine is subsection (2) of clause 1, provides an element of definition and clarity. I wish to take a close look at the five items in that laundry list. The first of three items of the five would rule out large parts of classical literature, large sections of classical sculpture, all of which are a cherished part of our heritage.

Mr. Cash: That is nonsense.

Mr. Mikardo: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I will gladly give way. I am not by any means the best speaker in this House, but I am the best one at giving way. I will gladly give way, but I wish that the hon. Gentleman would not sit there muttering because we may mishear him and do him the injustice of thinking that he has said something that he has not said.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is very kind and he always gives way in a considerate manner. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, if he is right, many of our classical publications could already have been proceeded against under the Obscene Publications Act 1959? They have not and they will not and that is that.

Mr. Mikardo: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is right, but I know that this licence to proceed against publications is extremely wide. It would embrace a great deal of our classical heritage. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I could spend — I will not because I know that we wish to proceed with the debate—the rest of today giving a huge list of all the items of literature, painting and sculpture that would fall foul of one or other of the first three definitions.

I confine myself to listing only a few of the many parts of the Bible and the works of William Shakespeare that will fall foul of those three provisions. The first provision states:

"acts of violence or cruelty (of any kind)".

With regard to the Bible that would have ruled out the film —I do not know whether hon. Members remember this film; it must be all of 20 years ago — "Samson and Delilah". It was a pretty poor film, but it gave a lot of pleasure to a lot of people. As far as I am aware, it did not corrupt or deprave any of the viewers into going out and trying to kill a thousand people with the jawbone of an ass. However, that film would have been rules out by this Bill. The slaying of the first born, portrayed in one of the earlier biblical films—I cannot remember its title—would have caused that film to be ruled out.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South has already said, the provisions would rule out the scene of the murder of the king in "Macbeth" and would rule out the scene in "Julius Caesar" when he was stabbed in the forum. Indeed, the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood has said that they would rule out a great deal of the news coverage of wars, civil wars, terrorist activities and so on.

The second item in the laundry list is:

"incidents of a horrific nature".

That would rule out any depiction of the crucifixion and it would rule out "King Lear".

Mr. Cash: Absolute junk.

Mr. Mikardo: There is a horrific act on stage in "King Lear".

Mr. Gerald Howarth: The hon. Gentleman is seeking to rehearse the boring old arguments that he produced last year——

Mr. Sedgemore: They are not boring, far from it.

Mr. Howarth: The hon. Gentleman believes that it would be inconceivable that a jury would not convict if the crucifixion were portrayed or if Gloucester's eyes were gouged out on stage. Is he convinced that a jury would convict in such circumstances?

Mr. Mikardo: If the hon. Gentleman is bored by my speech he is at liberty to go back to Jimmy Young. If he had been in the Chamber all the time, he would not have asked that question because I have already answered it. *—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Howarth: There is no need for the usual rabble. I am genuinely sorry that I was not here for all the hon. Gentleman's speech. He has been speaking for almost 25 minutes longer than I, and I took a long time. I left the Chamber briefly to convey the message to a wider audience and I apologise for being absent.

Mr. Mikardo: I do not mind the hon. Gentleman leaving. I confess that I did not even miss him. However, I do mind him wasting time by asking me to repeat an answer to a question.

The third of the five items in the laundry list is

"sexual activity (of any kind)"—

the words "of any kind" are weighty words—

"or acts of force or restraint which are associated with such activity".

The inclusion of the words "of any kind" makes the ban very wide indeed since it applies to much more than fornication itself. The words would rule out in the Bible the story of Judah and Tamar and the story of David and Bathsheba and, in Shakespeare, it would rule out "The Rape of Lucrece."

The fourth item in the laundry list is

"genital organs or urinary or excretory functions".

The words "genital organs" would rule out many classical masterpieces and sculptures which depict genital organs.

The words "urinary or excretory functions" would rule out a travelogue on the city of Brussels, which includes the fountain in the Grande Place. Fancy ruling that out just because it shows that little fellow in the fountain.

Mr. Buchan: That is an important example. My hon. Friend will remember the marvellous suspense film "The Wages of Fear" in which the driver and his mate take a truck of dynamite to the mountains. When they are through with their tense and dangerous journey the men stop and stand at the side of the road and urinate together. It is a marvellous expression of companionship and relief and a most important part of the story.

Mr. Mikardo: I remember that sharp scene. It certainly had a message. A similar scene appears in Brecht's

[Mr. Mikardo]

"Coriolanus", a very important play. It throws a totally new light on the Coriolanus story. One of the most important pieces of dialogue in the play takes place when two centurions talk while standing side by side, as hon. Members of the House sometimes talk, when standing side by side in the loo relieving themselves. Of course, in the hon. Gentleman's text, urinary or excretory functions are not confined to human beings. Therefore, the urinary or excretory functions of animals are included.

Mr. Buchan: That would rule out polo at Windsor.

Mr. Mikardo: It would rule out polo at Windsor. It would also rule out pictures of mounted police attending demonstrations, any farmyard scenes, and a film about a day out at the zoo. The more that one examines the list, the more one realises that it is ridiculous.

The fifth item in the list is more serious and valid. It relates to the taking of controlled drugs. Unfortunately, that would rule out out—I am sure the hon. Gentleman did not intend this — any film designed to persuade people not to take or to stop taking drugs.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain to the House the words:

"Any article . . . made or intended to use in connection with . . . sexual activity (of any kind)."

He properly added a proviso:

"other than an article manufactured for use primarily for the purposes of birth control or for use primarily for the purpose of preventing the transmission of sexually-transmissible diseases."

In other words, the Bill will ban the showing of such an article unless it is shown for beneficial purposes. We would all go along with that, but there is no similar proviso in respect of item No. 5 in the shopping list. The Bill does not state:

"Provided that the scene does not have the intention of dissuading people from taking drugs."

There is a considerable inconsistency. Taken literally, the text means that a film such as "Christiane F", which graphically depicts the degradation of drug addiction to warn against it, could be the subject of a prosecution.

I apologise to the House for speaking for so long. It is a terribly complex issue that needs to be analysed with great care.

There is a profound objection to a criminal sanction or a ban that, prima facie, would apply to many works of recognised cultural merit. As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South pointed out, as he has done before—he has given much thought to this element of art—part of the function of art, literature, film, documentaries and, above all, satire, is precisely to jolt reasonable people, to make them re-examine complacent assumptions. A good deal of creative imagery makes use of sexual or violent themes as part of that process, frequently with a deeply moral purpose, which all of us would support.

By taking gross offensiveness as the yardstick of guilt, the Bill enables prosecutions to be brought against articles of recognised social or artistic merit, leaving publishers to exculpate themselves — if they can — by proving that merit outweighs offensiveness. Again, as my hon. Friend said, the possibility of prosecution is a deterrent to creating and publishing offensive art.

Few writers, few film makers and even fewer executives and adminstrators would welcome the prospect of a fortnight in the Old Bailey dock, however likely it is that, at the end of the fortnight, they will be acquitted. That is the answer to the point put to me by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) who said that juries would not convict in a manifestly invalid case. It can take 18 months before a case comes to court. The poor chap is under a cloud for those 18 months. Then he has to spend a fortnight going through a tedious trial and cross-examination in the Old Bailey. He could be tempted to say, "If there is the least doubt that a Mrs. Grundy might get hold of this, let us not do it at all." The Bill will stifle a great deal of creative art.

I object to the Bill because of the chilling effect of the new test in authorising police and prosecution action, an effect that will be particularly marked on institutions in the film and television industry. The Bill will create a climate of caution and fear in which works that are potentially offensive because they are radical will not be commissioned, made or broadcast because of possible risks. This is not a climate in which innovative and exciting television and cinema can flourish.

It must be appreciated that the breadth of the gross offensiveness test is a form of state power which is being extended to lawyers in the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. It is they who can authorise police action, as the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood pointed out, on inscrutable subjective perceptions of anything on television or in literature that they think is offensive. The DPP, under the Prosecution of Offences Act 1979 which creates the office of the DPP, works under the "superintendence"—a strange word—of the Attorney-General who is, of course, a member of the Government and who may take into account the political considerations, in the widest sense of the word "political" rather than the party sense, in approving or encouraging prosecutions. It follows that the Bill creates a situation in which legal bureaucrats, working through police obscenity squads, will be given a new role in defining the limit of artistic freedom, a role for which they have no qualifications; hence, the scope for political censorship is greatly increased.

It is doubtful whether, if the Bill had been on the statute book in 1979, a programme such as "That Was The Week That Was" would ever have been made or shown. It is doubtful whether Mr. Jasper Carrott would be able to operate if the Bill had already been passed. There could easily be censorship of things which politicians find grossly offensive.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Does the hon. Gentleman understand that the broadcasters accept that they are acting in the role of censor? All the Bill seeks to do as regards broadcasters is to say, "We want to give the public an opportunity to call your judgment to account." To do so the public have to persuade the DPP. There are enormous hurdles to overcome. If anything, the Bill is far more modest than it should be.

Mr. Mikardo: That may be what the hon. Gentleman thinks, but I do not think that that conclusion would be reached by any independent person studying the Bill. If a judgment about the potential offensiveness of an item has to be made, those who work in the media, who are subject to guidelines, and do a good deal of research to monitor and amend the guidelines, have more qualifications to judge than a lawyer in the office of the DPP who knows nothing about the medium on which he is acting as a censor. If the hon. Gentleman is not willing to take my

word for it, I shall quote a greater authority, Lord Reid, who was a most distinguished jurist. He warned against reactivating the old offence of conspiracy to outrage public decency—a concept to which the Bill gives a new lease of life. In a famous judgment, Lord Reid said:

"If there were in any book, new or old, a few pages or even a few sentences which any jury could find to be outrageously indecent, those who took part in its publication and sale would risk conviction. Notoriously many old works, commonly regarded as classics of the highest merit, contain passages which many jurymen might regard as outrageously indecent. It has been generally supposed that the days of bowdlerizing the classics were long past, but the introduction of this new crime"—

I interpolate, the introduction of the Bill—

"might make publishers of such works think twice. It may be said that no prosecution would ever be brought except in a very bad case. But I have expressed on previous occasions my opinion that a bad law is not defensible on the ground that it would be judiciously administered."

That point reinforces the one that I made some time ago.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman has placed a great deal of emphasis on that case. Will he also give weight to what the IBA says in the introduction to its television guidelines, in which it states:

"The guidelines are not necessarily the last word on the matters to which they refer. 'These guidelines are therefore not designed to fetter normal editorial discretion' and that they do not constitute a code under the Act itself."

Therefore, the emphasis that the hon. Gentleman places on the guidelines is demonstrably false.

Mr. Mikardo: I am not putting emphasis on the guidelines. I am saying that the people who drew them up and agonised over them for years—they were always commissioning research to see if the guidelines were valid and altering them if the research pointed in that direction—were likely to be better judges of the matter than a lawyer in the DPP's office who went straight from the Inns of Court to that office and has been immured in it for several years.

It is not merely a question of bowdlerising the classics. The Bill would include many programmes of satirical and social importance. "Spitting Image" makes use of gross images which are offensive to many people, especially those who are being imaged. There is the particular instance of the Murdoch puppet, which directly contravenes clause 1(2)*(a)* (iv) of the Bill every time it breaks wind, because that is an excretory function. Documentaries about famine in Africa and "War on Want" advertisements may contravene clause 1(2)*(a)* (ii) by portraying incidents of a horrific nature, as they do.

I shall turn to the test of a reasonable person. The Bill judges gross offensiveness by reference to the sensibilities of a reasonable person. The immediate problem is that reasonable people have different thresholds of taking offence. Since the taking of offence is a subjective reaction, this standard merely adds to the uncertainty that I have mentioned. When punishment is measured by years in prison, it is wrong to judge an individual guilty by reference to artificial standards.

Most crimes are of guilty intention—a subjective appreciation in the mind of the defendent that his or her conduct is wrong. The Bill does not require any prosecution to prove mens rea—that is to say, it is not required to prove knowledge on the part of the defendant that the publications will shock. It imputes guilt whenever a tribunal retroactively decides that a publication would shock a hypothetical person were that person ever to see the publication. Publishers cannot know in advance what sort of reasonable person will be constructed by the tribunals judging the work; and in consequence they cannot possibly foretell by what standard they will be judged.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It seems that the only way in which we shall be able to get our points across is through making interventions in the speech of the hon. Gentleman, rather than making them in our own speeches. The hon. Gentleman seems to be advancing the argument of the universality of mens rea in any criminal act. I wonder whether he voted for making incitement to racial hatred an offence, notwithstanding that it was not the intention of the person uttering the words or taking the action to incite racial hatred. I would be surprised if I did not see the hon. Gentleman's name in the list of those voting in favour of that provision, notwithstanding mens rea.

Mr. Mikardo: I cannot remember how I voted. However, the hon. Gentleman's intervention is irrelevant because the legal provisions in respect of incitement to racial hatred are useless. They are defective and not properly enforced because of the difficulty of bringing villains to justice under them. There is no comparison between what I am saying and the point that the hon. Gentleman makes.

The other objection to a reasonable person as a standard is that the Bill fails to give any direction as to quantity. The danger is that the direction of guilt or innocence could depend on what direction the judge gave to the jury as to the proportion of reasonable persons whom the prosecution had to prove were shocked. One judge might think it is sufficient if one person was shocked, while in a different court in another part of the country, or in the same court three weeks later, another judge might say that it needs more than one person, because that one person might just be a one off, or a person with a particularly low threshold for taking offence. There is an element of uncertainty hanging over the producer of the work.

Mr. Nicholls: That is precisely the point that I put to the hon. Gentleman at a time which now seems many hours ago. The whole drift of his argument would seem to call for the repeal of the Obscene Publications Act. I am sure that his constituents would be interested to hear that, and now would be a useful opportunity for him to fulfil the obligation that he accepted to answer that point.

Mr. Mikardo: The hon. Gentleman should not waste the time of the House, and should not unnecessarily lengthen my speech. He put that point to me earlier, and I said that before I finished I would answer it with precision. I say again that before I finish my speech I will answer that point with precision. If he is present to hear that, I shall welcome his presence.

I shall now say something about the return of what is called the purple passage—a single passage that causes offence. The most important and overdue reform that was achieved by the Obscene Publications Act 1959 was requiring works of art and literature to be judged "as a whole". It ended a century of forensic philistinism in which books by Zola, de Maupassant, D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Radclyffe Hall and others were deemed obscene because of a so-called "purple passage"—in some cases, a single sentence lifted out of context. That practice was

[Mr. Mikardo]

obviously grossly unfair, and much of the freedom enjoyed by literature since the Act is a result of the dominant effect principle enshrined in section 1.

The new Bill ignores section 1(1), and applies the test only to articles described by section 1(2). The "taken-as-a-whole" qualification will not apply to articles alleged to be grossly offensive. This is where the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood will have difficulty in amending the Bill in the sense in which he says that he wishes to, when he returns from his interview with Jimmy Young. It follows that if any passage or sequence, or even a single frame in a film, is apt to cause shock and dismay, a prosecution can be brought.

In 1959, the Select Committee on the Obscene Publications Act stressed the importance of considering the dominant effect on the whole work. It stated:

"The contrary view, under which a work could be judged obscene by reference to isolated passages without considering the total effect, would, if taken to its logical conclusion, deprive the reading public of the works of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Fielding and Smollett, except in expurgated editions. We therefore recommend that regard should be paid in any legislation to the effect of the work as a whole."

There is, I am told by a lawyer friend, a very clear and, in some respects, amusing illustration of that on the legal records. A long time ago, when Asquith was an eager junior counsel, he was hired by an organisation called the National Vigilance Association—it was the forerunner of the National Viewers and Listeners Association—to prosecute purveyors of "dangerous" French literature. He recalled the episode in his memoirs:

"I spent the best part of a fortnight in a long vacation with scissors and a pot of paste in hand in a diligent quest for the most objectionable passages in M. Zola's voluminous works".

Well, he did not waste his time. His summer of smut-spotting won the day. The purple passages from M. Zola, set down out of context in the indictment, so grossly offended the jury that they demanded that they should not be read aloud, and the poor old bookseller was gaoled. It is not without interest that Mrs. Whitehouse has adopted a similar tactic in screening extracts from television programmes to convince hon. Members of the need to pass the Bill.

The abandonment of the "taken as a whole" qualification and the absence of any requirememt for the prosecution to prove an intention to offend means that there is no scope, in applying the new test, for any consideration of the purpose. The theme, the message and the intention of the work. As my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South said, anger and outrage are entirely valid emotions to arouse in a cause as part of the political or social argument for a change in perceptions. Reactions of shock and outrage have been part of the prerogative and function of drama from the very early days of the classical Greek theatre.

When scenes that arouse these emotional responses are plucked out of context and dissected in a court room, the result is grossly unfair to the publisher or the broadcasters. That is particularly the case when the defendant's motive is good. Under the Bill, motive is irrelevant. Somebody who produces a work that is designed to raise the moral standards is as much a victim of this legislation as sombody whose purposes are objectionable or whose purposes are not decent. There is no scope for defendants to testify about their purpose. Surely nobody thinks that that is fair.

Another reform of fundamental importance to the proper operation of the obscenity laws, as established by Parliament under the 1959 Act, is the requirement that directs the court's attention to the effect of an article on its likely audience. We are referring to damage being done to people. If there is no damage, what are we worrying about? We worry about it only if damage is caused. No article is obscene per se. Its potential for causing harm must be judged according to the character and reactions of the persons who are likely to see or to read it. That is an obviously fair and reasonable approach.

For example, it seems that explicit material may be shown to particular interest groups who would not be affected by it. Doctors, research workers, lawyers and policemen may see it. The real question is whether the publisher of written or visual material is to be condemned as a criminal for causing harm to a reasonably foreseeable group of consumers. The Bill abandons that audience control approach in favour of a test that pivots on the causing of dismay to the person who might be termed the reasonable busybody. What is criminal is not the shock or disgust that are caused to the consumers, who may in no way be disturbed by exposure to this material, but the shock and disgust that are aroused in sombody by the very idea that other consumers may enjoy the material.

Subsections (3) and (4) of clause 1 deem an offence to have been committed where a reasonable person regards either a particular act of publication or

"any further publication that could reasonably be expected to follow from that publication"

as grossly offensive. That makes it plain that the Bill seeks to protect people not from gratuitous exposure to outrageous material but from becoming angry or outraged at the thought that the material is being seen and enjoyed by others. That is nothing but a killjoy's charter.

That raises a fundamental philosophical problem for this legislation. It is aimed not at protecting anybody from direct assault by the depiction of physical acts, but at protecting the hypothetical individual from the thought that others may, of their own volition, be exposing themselves to ugly words and pictures. For example, a magistrate must ask himself not whether he is offended by the article in question but whether he is offended at the thought that such an article, even if it does not offend him, might be seen as offensive by others.

The liability goes further. Publishers are liable not merely for shocking the court by virtue of a particular publication, but for shocking it at the prospect of further publications for which they are not directly or morally responsible. Whenever republication, for example by third party copy, is reasonably foreseeable, conviction may follow even though the original publication is inoffensive. The result of such prosecutions will again be to impose a suffocating caution on film makers and television producers. They must exclude not only exclude material that magistrates might find to be grossly offensive, but must exclude footage that might be extracted by video techniques and become offensive when used in circumstances over which the publisher or producer has absolutely no control.

I have said a good deal about clause 1 and I shall deal much more briefly with clause 2. Clause 2 violates what I have been told is legally correct in three respects. First, it

allows the prosecution to have two bites at the cherry of conviction by putting its case in alternative ways. It can allege that the article tends to deprave and corrupt and, if that allegation is rejected, the prosecution can invite the court to convict on the basis that the publication is, in any event, grossly offensive. Since those tests involve entirely different questions, the prosecution is manifestly given an unfair advantage.

Secondly, that unfairness is reinforced by the provision that allows evidence introduced in support of one ground to be used to obtain a conviction on the other ground. Such a situation, I am told, is unprecedented and unparalleled in English criminal law. It could work, and will work, in a thoroughly unsatisfactory way.

Evidence may be called under the existing law in relation to a film about drugs to show that the drug in question induces corrupt behaviour. The court may decide that the film does not promote drug-taking so test one is not made out. However, the court may go on to use that evidence to convict the film maker on test two on the basis of emotions of shock and disgust generated by hearing the otherwise inadmissible evidence.

Alternatively, the court may hear, pursuant to test two, all sorts of allegations made by complainants who have been offended by the film suggesting that it corrupts in insidious ways. The court may find that the film itself was not grossly offensive under test two but use the otherwise inadmissable hearsay allegations to bring in a conviction under test one.

What is grossly unfair about that procedure is that the defence, in contrast to the double open door of the prosecution, will be strictly limited to the orthodox rules of evidence and will not be able to call evidence to rebut the prejudicial allegations.

The third reason why the proposal is objectionable is that it is clearly a more serious crime to corrupt than to offend but the Bill makes no provision to distinguish between the two. Therefore, film makers, authors and television executives are in danger of being sent to prison for corruption after a trial in which the jury did not find them guilty of corruption but merely of causing offence.

One particularly offensive feature of the Bill is that it envisages and statutorily encourages raids on television studios, film laboratories, and private homes, to seize taken, unedited film, even unprocessed film, prior to its being broadcast. Clause 4(2) extends criminality under the new test to anyone who has offensive material in his possession or control. The Bill, unrealistically, in the context of what happens in film and television, fails to take any account of the changes that would have been made in the editing process and of the fact that a product that is proposed to be broadcast and is offensive would, by the time it was edited and came to be broadcast, not contain anything offensive.

Subsection (4)(b) provides a wholly inadequate defence for those who are within the range of criminal complicity but in reality are not responsible for the publication—that is, the ancillary staff, whom I mentioned. They have the burden of proving, first, that they did not know of, and —not "or" — secondly, that they had no reason to suspect the presence of offending material. The thing that is wrong with that in principle is that it reverses the burden of proof. There is no good reason why the prosecution should not be obliged to prove, as an element of charge, that the defendant knew of the impending shocking broadcast. Indeed, if the promoter of the Bill seeks to have a fair Bill, there is no good reason for him not to require the prosecution to prove mens rea, as it must in most other serious crimes. Were that the case, defendants could be convicted only if it were proved that they intended to cause gross offence.

In any event, the protection afforded in the Bill is minimal. A governor of the BBC could not avail himself of that protection, for example, if there had been stories in the press about the allegedly shocking contents of a film. The governor would have reason to suspect that it was offensive because a newspaper said that a television programme was coming that was offensive. The law would enable Mrs. Whitehouse to stop anything ever being shown, by calling a press conference and saying that a programme was coming up, and although she had not seen it and did not know what was in it, as a reasonable person, she would be grossly offended by it. It could be stopped, and everything else could be stopped.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: That is absolute nonsense, and the hon. Gentleman knows it. Mrs. Whitehouse, or any other concerned citizen, would have to prove to the satisfaction of a magistrate or ultimately a jury that a reasonable person would find such a programme grossly offensive. It is not a matter of whether one individual who goes along and sees the Director of Public Prosecutions finds it offensive. What is more, the hon. Gentleman knows it, and should have the honesty to tell the House that he knows it.

Mr. Mikardo: The hon. Gentleman has every right to say that what I am saying is nonsense. He has absolutely no right to say that I am putting forward nonsense knowing it to be nonsense. That is imputing motives to me in a manner that is inconsistent with the traditions of the House and the courtesies that Members of the House show to each other—at least, the courtesies that the decent Members of the House show to each other. After that, I shall not give way any further to the gentleman whom, out of courtesy, I must still call the hon. Gentleman.

It is too easy to obtain advance publicity for a forthcoming publication, which can then be blacked merely because of that publicity. It could then be said that everyone connected with the publication — even the motorcycle courier carrying it from the editing laboratory to Broadcasting House—knew that it was going to be offensive because a press conference had been told that it was, and they should have read the newspapers.

Clause 4(7) purports to extend the public good defence to television. Does it really do that? I doubt whether it does. By a remarkable oversight it includes only section 4(1) of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, which states the defence, and not section 4(2), which permits experts to testify in support of it.

Many people believe that Penguin Books would have been convicted for publishing "Lady Chatterley's Lover" if distinguished experts had not testified to its literary merit. In any event, the clause 4 defence does not provide satisfactory protection. Once again, the burden of proof is shifted to the defence, leaving the jury to cope with the wholly illogical exercise of balancing artistic merit against gross offensiveness. How does one measure offensiveness? How is it weighed against artistic merit? Section 4 of the 1959 Act was not designed for television and the cinema, but for literature. The specific grounds for defence are "the interests of science, literature, art or learning, or of other objects of general concern."

[Mr. Mikado]

The word "learning" has been construed to mean the product of scholarship, so it is highly doubtful whether most documentaries or current affairs programmes could be defended under clause 4 because they do not claim to be works of scholarship.

Sex education has specifically been held by the courts to fall outside the clause 4 protection. Therefore, revelations made by anyone with the purpose, for example, of getting expert advice from properly authorised counsellors could fall foul of the law.

I want now to fill in a passing reference that I made earlier to police powers. It should be clearly recognised that extending the scope of the test of obscenity involves a concomitant and wide extension of police powers of search and seizure. Indeed, the enactment of new criminal law imposes a duty on police to investigate alleged breaches, either of their own volition, or as a result of public complaints. However, there can be no doubt that the enactment of the Bill would dramatically increase police activity, as bookshops, libraries, art galleries, museums, television studios and cinemas were scoured for evidence of material that caused gross offence to people who were as reasonable as a divinely inspired chief constable, such as Mr. James Anderton. Such are the inconsistencies of the law in its enforcement that films and dramas that are shown, for example, on the ITV network may require cuts when shown by Granada in the north-west but not when shown by TVS in Hampshire and Dorset.

The British Board of Film Classification, as we all know, operates a sophisticated system of censorship that is based on existing obscenity law and considerations that are applicable to audiences of different age groups. The Bill produces all sorts of difficulties for the board because the test of gross offensiveness will have to be adopted at every level of the classification system. The board is already required to have regard to a video's suitability for viewing in the home. The Bill requires the board to have further regard to whether a reasonable person might take offence at any scene being observed in the home. The penalty for failure might lead, conceivably, to prosecution of the British Board of Film Classification or to prosecution of its officers.

I wish to make a couple of final points and I renew my apologies for having detained the House for so long. The rhetoric in support of the Bill has assumed that all cases will be tried by jury and it is assumed that juries can be trusted to resist unreasonable prosecution. I think that the hon. Member for Stafford said that. I think that is so in many cases, but it is not invariably true. In any event, it should be recognised that the Bill, like the existing Act, does not provide any right to trial by jury. It is for the prosecuting authorities alone to decide how a prosecution shall proceed and, therefore, whether a jury will be empanelled.

For a lot of the time, perhaps for most of it, the trial will be before a stipendiary magistrate or two or three local justices of the peace. If they are grossly offended by the material, or at least by the thought that it might be published for persons other than themselves, they will make a forfeiture order requiring the police to destroy all copies of the article—not merely the offensive section but the whole item even if the offensive section is only 1 per cent. or less—and the police will be required to destroy the whole of the article found in their jurisdiction. A power exercised by local worthies to destroy artistic works on the grounds of offence of their own personal subjective sensibility is neither a satisfactory nor an acceptable procedure for censorship of films or television.

Finally, I shall answer the question put to me by two Conservative hon. Members. One of them put it once and the other put it twice in identical terms. I was asked what I would do about it. In answer to that, I shall repeat what I said earlier. This is an area of great complexity and great difficulty. The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood said that there are difficulties and he never said a truer word. The area is much too difficult and involved and concerns too many people in one way or another to be a proper subject for a private Member's Bill. It ought to be carefully researched and there should be wide consultation on the product of that research before legislation is introduced by the Government of the day.

I hope that the next Government will set up, either through the Law Commission or through some other appropriate body, an authoritative inquiry into the whole of this subject. I hope that the inquiry is not too long drawn-out. I understand that there is not enough time in this Session for such a procedure. On the basis of the findings of that inquiry the Government should produce a Green Paper for wide consultation. They should then take all the expert and non-expert views into account and produce a Government Bill that will avoid all the pitfalls that the hon. Members for Davyhulme and for Cannock and Burntwood have struggled with and have not managed to avoid. I believe that we need a fresh law on obscenity. However, we should not try to introduce that in a glib, superficial and therefore inevitably defective way.

12.59 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Mellor): It is a great pleasure, and indeed a privilege, to follow the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). He is a most distinguished Member of the House and will be much missed when he is no longer with us. I cannot for the life of me understand why he is giving up when, in his 79th year, he has treated us to such a tour de force. Although I did not agree with all that he said, I think—as I have said before in these debates—that we are in the presence of one of the foremost parliamentarians, certainly in my time in this House. I wish the hon. Gentleman well. I have not enjoyed a performance by a member of the older generation so much since I saw Bill Fraser as the drunken photographer in "When We Are Married" at the theatre at the other end of Whitehall. No other parallels must be drawn from that. Both were classic exponents of art. I am glad to have heard the hon. Gentleman speak. I am sorry if his speech kept a few other hon. Members from speaking, but the hon. Gentleman had obviously thought very carefully about what he wanted to say.

It was also a pleasure for me to hear the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Sir C. Mather), who is elsewhere at the moment. He made his first speech in the Chamber for 10 years, not through any lack of diligence as a Member of Parliament, but because for that period he was rendering distinguished service in the Whips' Office. It was very good to hear my hon. Friend.

I congratulate also my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) on bringing forward the Bill and on the manner in which he presented it. This is a difficult subject on which to legislate. Many

are called, but few are chosen. All of us would agree that a balance must be struck between the need to maintain freedom of expression and the need to inhibit those who abuse that freedom. As the debate has illustrated, difficulty is caused in agreeing upon where that balance should lie. However, we all agree that at the very least there is room for improvement in the present statutory arrangements.

We need not be reticent in coming to grips with the issue. Over the past eight years—largely it must be said, due to initiatives by Conservative Members—a number of measures have been introduced to strengthen the law on obscenity. They have not had dire consequences. Their consequences have been entirely beneficial. It is appropriate that my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) is present in the Chamber, because he introduced the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981, which prohibits the display of indecent material in a public place, and has worked extremely well. No one would regard that as anything other than a most useful piece of legislation.

The same is true of the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act 1982 introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), which removed the exemption of bogus cinema clubs from the licensing controls in the legislation on cinemas. The Government introduced the licensing of sex shops in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982. Finally, I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) is present in what otherwise is becoming rather a connoisseur's event. My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South introduced what is now the Video Recordings Act 1984, and that represents one of my happiest memories of my time in this place. I believe that Parliament came to grips with a major problem at that time, in that we legislated on video nasties. We had support and help from both sides of the House. Whatever other problems we must face in society—and we must face many—the video nasty is certainly not the problem that it was. Indeed, if my area is anything to go by, the video nasty is no longer a problem of any dimension. For all that, we must be careful to steer between the Scylla of laxity and the Charybdis of repression. We must be clear that Parliament has begun to get down to serious work over the past decade and has made a number of major improvements.

This is not an issue on which only the narrow-minded are entitled to be heard, and it is not a subject about which only the narrow-minded are worried. I make that point especially to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), who seemed to think that only a small fringe of people were worried about the subject. That is not the case at all. I hope that we can avoid a dialogue of the deaf in which verbal haymakers from those who believe that "EastEnders" is a threat to civilisation as we know it are matched by verbal haymakers from those who would claim that any change to the present law strikes at the heart of artistic endeavour. In my four years of responsibility for the obscenity laws I have heard much of each, and I have had enough of both. They do not illuminate a discussion that should take place on a more sensible and mainstream basis.

Perhaps I flatter myself excessively by claiming not to be narrow-minded, but I certainly know that I am worried, and I believe that we should all be worried. We should not focus on a narrow prurience about sex, but we should be worried about extreme and sadistic violence—especially extreme and sadistic sexual violence, of which far too much is depicted.

I have been a Home Office Minister for more than four years. Although I am not quite as old as the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar, I am old enough to be on my third Home Secretary, which is a sign of age creeping on. As a Home Office Minister, I have had to consider crime. Although I note that violent crime is not increasing as rapidly as other crime, and not as rapidly as it did in the late 1970s, it is still a major problem in our society, as perceived by all of us, not least by our constituents. Although it is true that under 1 per cent. of all offences are serious violent crimes, much of that 1 per cent. seems to be very nasty indeed and, in some respects, getting worse. I remember what that distinguished Metropolitan police woman, Thelma Wagstaff, said about rape becoming an increasingly nastier offence, with much more gratuitous violence being added. I cannot put out of my mind the thought that some of it must be influenced by the violence to which we have become so inured on the silver screen.

I appreciate that those matters are difficult to prove and that some people overdo the comparisons, but some of the material that we see tends to turn talkers into doers, or at least influences the way in which doers set about doing it. We should be worried about that.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mellor: I shall not give way too much, because the only consequence would be to prevent other hon. Members from speaking, which I do not wish to do. I shall give way this once.

Mr. Cash: Did my hon. Friend note the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) about violence on television and the fact that, unlike my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the right hon. Gentleman did not vote for the Second Reading of the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, Etc.) (Amendment) Bill last year? We have yet to discover whether he will turn up today, but it is clear that not one alliance Member has turned up at any point this morning.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that broadcasters should consider halving the amount of sex and violence shown on television for an experimental period, and the suggestion attracted many people. Although I do not wish this to become a partisan debate, I do not believe that it is partisan to observe that there is no alliance representative here. It is very regrettable.

As I said, I cannot put out of my mind the thought that some serious crime, or the way in which it is carried out, might be influenced by the daily diet of ever-increasing scenes of violence on the screens to which we subject ourselves, whether in the cinema, on television or via video.

As the parent of young children I cannot avoid noting the compulsion of our youngsters to watch television and video. I cannot help reminding myself of how we set out with the good intention that our children would be different and would not be glued to the television all day. However, they are glued to the television too much, even if it is not all day.

As I staggered downstairs this morning, after a week of the Criminal Justice Bill and contemplated the exciting

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possibility of haranguing the House yet again on this issue, my two-year-old was glued to the television. At least he was watching "The Snowman", which is one of the many substantial achievements of Channel 4. It is a beautiful film and, although I was seeing it for the 30th time, I am bound to say that I enjoyed it.

Children have been faced with a cultural revolution. I know that when the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar was growing up there was no television. My parents got a set only when I was about 11. Now our children are brought up on that box. It is hard for us to be as fastidious as we would like in controlling what they see because, as they grow older, we face the realisation that it does not much matter how we run our own home — it is what our children watch when they go to other people's homes that is important. That is why we should be concerned.

One can overstate the case. It is not part of my case, either as a Minister or speaking as an individual—if the two can be differentiated — that everything must be geared to the remote or certain possibility that children will be watching. I do not believe that that is part of the case for this Bill. We must be conscious of the fact that many of the traits in our society that we most regret and deplore, such as crime, are particularly manifest among youngsters brought up in what one might call the television and video generation. Fifteen years of age is the peak age for offences by young males and 14 years for young females. That should not cast the blame on broadcasters, but it does suggest that to question where we are going with broadcasting is not just a fringe concern.

I shall deal briefly with the specific points in the Bill as I do not wish to stand at the Dispatch Box for too long. There are two proposals in the Bill. The first is the proposal that the Obscene Publications Act 1959 shall apply to broadcasting. The second is the proposed change of the depraved and corrupt test in the 1959 Act to the "grossly offensive to reasonable people" test.

I wish to make one point abundantly clear. Whether the Obscene Publications Act applies to television does not, in any sense, affect the broadcasters' obligations to impose conditions on themselves which are far tighter than anything contained in the Obscene Publications Act. Those obligations were imposed by Parliament, not by Government, on the ITV system by the Broadcasting Act 1981 and on the BBC by the royal charter. For that reason I am bound to say that I slightly regret the article that appeared in one of the papers today under the name of Mr. Grade, BBCTV director of programmes. I appreciate that Mr. Grade meant that article as a well-intentioned critique of the Bill, but it could be seen as a suggestion that the BBC should be free to show material that is grossly offensive to reasonable people and that Parliament is wrong to inhibit the BBC from doing so. We know that is not the case. The BBC has produced a report "Violence on Television. The Report of the Wyatt Committee" and, with a somewhat more lurid cover, the publication, "Violence on Television. The guidelines for Production Staff 1987." I believe that the BBC were prompted by the Bill put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and it is welcome that the BBC has settled down to try to address this problem of the standards that are expected in relation to violence on television.

One thing that has always troubled me about the proposal to make broadcasters subject to the Obscene Publications Act — I said this last time, but I wish to repeat it — is that it might be thought by production staff that the only criterion to which they had to apply their minds was the Obscene Publications Act. That would be wrong. It would be a spectacular own goal by Parliament if Parliament were to suggest that. For that reason I have always been somewhat agnostic on that point. However, since my last opportunity to discuss this matter in January 1986 my thinking has developed in one respect. I believe that we are opening up broadcasting much more than we were. That is right because it gives the public more choice. However, we cannot open up broadcasting more and still say that broadcasting should be left entirely on one side and not subject to the general law of the land.

In the new broadcasting environment there is a case for making broadcasting subject to the Obscene Publications Act 1959, but we should be clear about what we are doing. We must insist that the standards of taste and decency imposed by the broadcasting legislation and by the BBC charter are the first line of defence for the public. The best that even the most impassioned advocate of the Obscene Publications Act can say is that it applies to one or two of the fringe films on Channel 4. I do not think that too much should be made of that.

I would hate to think that we needed a change in the Obscene Publications Act to clean up television. I do not think that we do. What we do need to clean up television is a determination by the broadcasters to live up to the standards imposed upon them by Parliament. I am delighted that on this divisive subject I have the warm-hearted support of Opposition Members.

I am trying not to do what I did at 2,30 am on Wednesday and speak for half an hour because that earned me any number of black marks in the Whips' book. I shall try to be reasonably concise.

Most people think that the Obscene Publications Act is out of date in its central particulars. That does not mean that this old blunderbuss is not often effective. The Act is not a dead letter. Between 1980 and 1984 the number of convictions under the Act increased from 162 to 429. Convictions fell back to 226 in 1985 and we do not yet have the 1986 figures to decide whether that was only a temporary phenomenon.

Over the same period almost 6·5 million obscene articles were seized by the Metropolitan police alone, so the Act is not a dead letter although in one or two material respects it is a rusty blunderbus. That is particularly true with the test of

"tend to deprave and corrupt".

Although that test appears in an Act passed in 1959 it was not formulated in 1959. Those who want to retain the 1959 Act in all material particulars should remember that the test first emerged in the judgment by the then Lord Chief Justice in the Hicklin case — in 1868. The Lord Chief Justice said:

"The test of obscenity is this, whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall".

There is nothing new under the sun. It is difficult to formulate a definition of obscenity. Even when the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was in the flush of youth—the Obscene Publications Act began

as his Bill — Parliament still had to find a modern definition of obscenity and had to reach back to 1868 to what the then Lord Chief Justice said.

I found it hard to suppress a snigger at one or two points made by Opposition Members. I wonder to how many other aspects of political, legal and social thought of 1868 they feel so much attachment. As it is, the thoughts of that long since deceased Lord Chief Justice still guide us today. I wonder whether we can do better than that.

The trouble with the words

"tend to deprave and corrupt"

is that they are redolent of another age. A modern jury rightly consists of men and women of all kinds over the age of 18 and, under the Criminal Justice Bill, under 70. When the judge advises them that they must ask whether the material has a tendency to deprave or to corrupt those who might be exposed to it they have to ask what does that mean in everyday language? Are we being fair to those fellow citizens whom we entrust with the task of deciding where the line should be drawn? It almost invites that most extraordinary moment of all the many extraordinary moments in British courts when, in the prosecution of "Lady Chatterley's Lover" Mr. Mervyn Griffiths-Jones QC, a prosecution counsel, rose to his full height and said to the jury:

"Ask yourselves the question, would you approve of your young sons, young daughters — because girls can read as well as boys — reading this book? Is it a book you would have lying around in your house? Is it a book that you would even wish your wife or your servants to read?"

At least the oratory matched the antiquity of the law, although one cannot say much else for it.

I consider that the laundry list — I have thought about this for a long time and I have in no sense changed my mind on the matter — advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme in a valiant effort to bring the matters before the House, had some use for the reasons that we have already considered. I have always thought that the laundry list was wrong because it sought to put out a tablet of stone with a list of things that one should not see, as though that was the end of the matter. My hon. Friend does not propose a laundry list in this measure. It is proposed that a jury should have to ask themselves whether what was shown was grossly offensive to a reasonable person, within limitations.

In defence of that proposition — I could say a lot, but again I wish my remarks to be brief — I repeat what I said in an intervention. Please do not let anyone, who is determined to reject the formulation, think that it is in any sense just the offering of a fringe group who are particularly obsessed and troubled by an issue that most people can otherwise take in their stride. I have already said that people should not too readily take this issue in their stride, but the truth of the matter is that the Bill is constructed on a formula first set forth in the report of the Williams committee. It was a well-balanced committee that was established by the last Labour Government because of their concern at the state of the law on obscenity. In defence of the material part of the definition, I shall quote from the report of the Williams committee. First, let us be clear that the concept of the reasonable person lies at the heart of British justice. The idea that there is something outlandish about proposing the test of a reasonable person in this matter simply does not begin to be credible. In case anyone thinks that what I say does not matter, the Williams committee said:

"After a great deal of consideration, we decided in favour of the definition's referring to what is offensive to *reasonable people*. The notion of a reasonable person . . . is already known to the law, in connection with judgments of responsibility, negligence, and reasonable foresight. While that is a rather different kind of matter, we thought it was appropriate to apply the term to the notion required here, which is that of a person who takes a balanced view of the material in question, and is neither excessively upset by each item nor totally indifferent to everything."

I could quote further — there is an extended passage on this matter. The reasonable person is someone with some sense and some appreciation of art. A reasonable person will not throw overboard a whole performance of King Lear because somebody has his eye gouged out, or fail to recognise the considerable merit of Dennis Potter, whose achievements as a playwright I appreciate and accept. The reasonable person has an artistic sense. A reasonable person applies his mind and says that if we are dealing with a sexual scene in a work by a playwright such as Dennis Potter, we look at it differently from the kind of sexual scenes that we saw in that awful thing entitled "I Spit on Your Grave". A reasonable person can tell the difference between trash and art, and this system does not give the difference between trash and art, but the sensible application of commonsense judgments by a reasonable man does. That is why this is a good measure.

Williams formulated a scheme in a somewhat different context. I do not want to pray Williams in aid for every part of this matter — it is a different proposal. Williams came up with a proposal to restrict the availability to adults-only shops of material that is offensive to reasonable people. About offensiveness, he said:

"the notion of offensiveness needs further qualification. There are various kinds of matters which might prove in various ways offensive to reasonable people but which would not properly be caught by a law aimed at pornography and similar material. We need a provision to make it clear what kind of offensiveness is in question. To meet this point we propose that matter should be restricted only in virtue of offensiveness which arises"—

this is relevant to the so-called laundry list—

"by reason of the manner in which it portrays, deals with or relates to violence, cruelty or horror, or sexual, faecal or urinary functions, or genital organs. The introduction of this specification does not mean a reversion to the list approach; it does not offer any ground of restriction independent of the notion of offensiveness. It merely makes clear what kind of dimension of offensiveness is in question. This clarification of the notion of offensiveness should, we propose, be spelled out in the law governing restriction."

The Williams committee was aiming at what was offensive to reasonable people as a basis for restricting availability of material to what, in effect, became sex shops. I do not think that the members of the Williams committee thought in their wildest dreams that people would stand up and say, "Television broadcasters should have the right to show what is offensive to reasonable people." The assumption was that we were dealing only with a fringe matter. The committee envisaged that people could get what they wanted in a sex shop but the rest of us should not be bothered with it. It was inherent in the committee's argument that the committee did not, at least, have to worry about what was shown on television.

It is important to see the modesty, attractiveness and force of the Bill's proposition. The three concepts are closely inter-related. All that my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood has done is to go further than Williams and say that the test should be a prohibition, not just a confining provision, but, so that the move is

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balanced — this is a balanced proposition — instead of material being offensive to reasonable persons, it should be grossly offensive to reasonable persons.

Whatever other thought any hon. Member carries with him into the Lobby, please let him not think that he will be inhibiting the sensible range of entertainment and art that should come about in a reasonable society by voting for the Bill. That Parliament should sanction a broadcasting system pushing out material over the airwaves which is grossly offensive to reasonable people is a bold proposition to be advanced by even the most far-out hon. Member. That is a high level of prohibition. I am bound to say that I consider the article by Michael Grade to be fundamentally misconceived and regrettable. I think that most broadcasters, when they reflect, will make it clear, as did Alasdair Milne, at the time of our last debate on this matter, that there is nothing that the broadcasters want to do that would put them outwith the Obscene Publications Act. It is not part of their obligations under the charter or under the Broadcasting Act to put out material that is grossly offensive to reasonable people.

Mr. Brinton: My hon. Friend's last statement was emphatic, and I was happy to hear it. But how does he square it with the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), the Bill's promoter, when we discussed works such as "The Singing Detective"? Does my hon. Friend support the Bill's promoter or is he saying that we shall not go down that line?

Mr. Mellor: I am putting the best construction that I can as a lawyer and a Minister on what the Bill does. Other people may say what they think the Bill does. I can only give as objective a view as I can of what I think it does. I hope that I have made my position clear to the House vis-a-vis Mr. Dennis Potter.

This is an important Bill because, for the first time in a long time, this legislation seeks to hit the centre of the target. The 1959 Act is a blunderbuss. It can still be fired with considerable effect at a number of people who try to pollute our society with unacceptable filth. But for too long, the courts have been inhibited in making a sensible decision. We in Parliament have permitted the perpetuation of a situation whereby juries of ordinary men and women are forced to tie themselves up in the knots of an ancient and out-moded formulation — the tendency to deprave and corrupt. We have an opportunity to support a proposition which takes and uses much of the thinking in the Williams report, adapts it to a new use and which says that, in the end, all that we can do as decent and civilised members of society is to try to protect ourselves and others from matters which are grossly offensive to reasonable people.

We accept art; we accept the challenging role of art and nothing in the Bill inhibits the challenge that art has rightly down the centuries thrown at the feet of some of us who are not so inciteful. I hope that we shall give the Bill a Second Reading.

1.30 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The matters that we are discussing are of importance to many people in the country. While I agreed with the first part of what the Minister said, I did not stay with his arguments in the second part of his speech.

We are talking, to a large extent, about television. I accept that the Bill is not confined to that, but we all have television in mind. Hon. Members are less well qualified than others to discuss these matters, because I suspect that our average number of viewing hours a week is significantly less than those of the rest of the population. I am hard put to remember having seen a fraction of the films that are frequently talked about as I simply did not have the opportunity to watch them. However, we have a responsibility in this matter which I am happy to accept.

One of the concerns that has been raised is the effect that television viewing has on people's attitudes, and therefore on their values and behaviour. Those relationships are clear, and if we are convinced that viewing certain types of material leads to a form of behaviour which is reprehensible, we should say that if that relationship can be established such material should not be shown, although it is not as easy to establish that relationship in practice as it may be in theory.

Another matter is that of good taste. Programmes can be shown on television which will not affect attitudes or behaviour, but which some people dislike because they are not in good taste and would prefer such programmes not to be shown on television. The Bill covers both of those ways of looking at the material. I have been appalled by some of the material that has been around in recent years. I was happy to support the Video Recordings Act 1984, which was introduced by the hon. Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright). I well remember my shock and amazement that such dreadful films could ever be made. Scotland Yard showed us some samples of those films when the Bill was proceeding through Parliament.

I have never believed that anything goes, but we are not talking about material that is normally as extreme as those video nasty items. There was no doubt about the right course of action to take in that case, and the House almost unanimously took it. We are talking about films and bits of material which are not normally objectionable enough to be caught by the Bill, if the Bill is to be interpreted in the way that the Minister suggested.

I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), who talked about the drip effect of violence. Surely the problem is that we have on television a diet of films which do not portray violence to such an extent that any one of them would be caught by the Bill, but which show bits of violence which cumulatively, week in, week out, have an effect on people who are vulnerable to such matters. I do not like that, and most people do not like it, but I cannot easily see how we can draft legislation which will stop it without going too far and stopping other matters.

Mr. Chris Smith: I have been following my hon. Friend's argument with care and I agree with it wholeheartedly. However, is not the problem sometimes that the individual episode of, say the "A-Team" would not be in any way grossly offensive to any reasonable person, but, because of the way in which it sanitises violence and does so week after week, it has a potentially deleterious effect on the minds of the people watching it?

Mr. Dubs: I agree completely with my hon. Friend, and that is the nub of many of the concerns that people have.

How can we devise legislation which will prevent that when, if we take one episode in a film, nobody could reasonably say that that ought not to be allowed? It is the cumulative effect that is so damaging. By that test, the Bill will not succeed.

Mr. Cash: Should there not be consistency as between the two wings of broadcasting organisations which this provision in the Bill achieves? I can give one example. There is a difference on acquired material as between the provisions of the BBC code and those of the IBA. Would the hon. Gentleman like to reflect on that?

Mr. Dubs: There may be merit in consistency. One of my concerns about the Bill is that it might result in even less consistency. I shall come more directly to that point later.

It is violence to which most people object, but particularly if it is violence associated with sex.

A second type of material to which many of us object —and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) will say something about that if she catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker—is the treatment of women as sex objects. One might not necessarily take objection to every page 3 photograph, although many of us probably would. However, those pictures which I suspect would not be caught by the Bill have an effect on men's attitudes because they belittle women's bodies in the eyes of men. That is their intention. They say that women's bodies are there for the use of men. That is why many of us object to them, even if a single photograph might not have that effect. However, week in, week out, a steady diet of such pictures has such consequences.

Ms. Clare Short: By my reading of it, those page 3 pictures would not be touched by the Bill, which does not answer the clamour from women to get rid of page 3.

Mr. Dubs: I agree with my hon. Friend, I am making that point because this is a defect in the Bill, which does not address itself to the widely held public feeling that some action is necessary.

A distinction can be drawn between two other subjects that may be portrayed. There is a difference between portraying something that may offend good taste but is within the experience of most people — for example, ordinary sexual activity—and portraying violence, which is still outside the direct experience of most people. I do not believe that it corrupts people to show them something which normally happens, although their good taste may be offended. However, it may have a damaging effect on people's behaviour if one shows them pictures of something that has been outside their experience, but which television, by its powerful impact, encourages them to copy in their day-to-day behaviour.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), apart from saying that he disliked one scene in "The Singing Detective", said that he thought that his Bill had the advantage of giving the public more say. I beg to differ. I think that the public will have more say if we can get the television authorities to adhere to their guidelines. We can debate those guidelines, and pressurise the BBC and the IBA either to apply them more tightly or, if they are inadequate, to devise better ones.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: I agree that if we can apply pressure, it is so much the better. But has not the very fact that we are debating the issue put the broadcasting authorities under the microscope and made them examine the guidelines? All that we are proposing today is a long-stop.

Mr. Dubs: Debates are good, and if they make the BBC and the IBA think harder, that is a desirable outcome. It is the Bill that may not be a desirable outcome.

The danger, which the Minister mentioned, is that the BBC and the IBA will say, "The legislation is a sanction, so we need not worry so much about our guidelines." That would weaken the existing controls on the type of material that is put out. The consequence of the Bill would thus run counter to the hon. Gentleman's aims. That is another reason why I think that it goes down the wrong path.

I should much prefer us to say to the broadcasting authorities, "We do not like your guidelines; we want them tightened up." That would be a much better way of doing things, because the guidelines have the flexibility that no amount of drafting skill can achieve in legislation. That is why we are not of one mind on what we all object to.

I appreciate that hon. Members do not wish to hear a list of swear words; that would not be appropriate. Nevertheless, the programme producers need to know whether "bloody", or a certain type of scene, is permissible. Otherwise, how can they control the material that we see?

If the words in the Bill, and the speech by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, are not clear enough, we shall confuse the television producers and the broadcasting authorities who must decide whether the material should go out; we shall also cause confusion in the minds of the police, magistrates and juries. If we are not clear, how can they understand what we are talking about?

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood did not make his position clear to me. One outcome of his argument, and of the Bill as drafted, is that because children can view anything that appears on television at any time of the day or night — whether on videos or directly — pressure will be put on the broadcasting authorities to keep in mind the likelihood that children are watching. I should not like children to be exposed to some of the material that is shown—quite rightly—in the late evening, but in the real world that cannot always be prevented. I should not like the more adult programmes that we can see later in the evenings on all four channels to be banned because children might be watching them.

We did not face that dilemma before television, because cinema classification worked fairly effectively, although, of course, children found it a challenge to go into films that they were not allowed to attend, and in most cinemas it was fairly easy for them to do so. We had controls then, at least in theory. Now we do not have them even in theory, except parental influence and sanctions which, as we know, are fairly difficult to apply.

There is a weakness in our approach, and we must resolve it. We cannot lay down legislation while saying, "We do not know what we will do about children. On the one hand, they should not watch; on the other hand, we concede that they are going to." We must decide, as a society, whether television should, at some time in the evening, show programmes for adults and run the risk that children may be watching.

My approach would be to remain in dialogue with the BBC and the IBA to ensure that the guidelines do what we believe they ought to do. If we do not speak with one voice,

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the IBA and the BBC will have difficulty in responding to the criticisms of Members of Parliament and members of the public. In the past I have complained to the broadcasting authorities about the films that they have shown, and it may have helped to take some of the violence out of some of the programmes. That is the right approach.

I am concerned about the fact that there would be two separate tests: the depraved and corrupt test and the grossly offensive test. They could not easily co-exist. We should be weakening the position of juries. If police action resulted in the forfeiture of material, juries might not even be able to look at it. We should be adding a greater element of unpredictability and inconsistency to what is already a difficult area. We might therefore be asking of the broadcasting authorities more than is reasonable.

I dislike violence on the television screen; I think that there is too much of it. However, by exerting pressure on the broadcasting authorities, I hope that we shall be able to reduce it.

One of the few television serials that I watched from start to finish was "The Singing Detective". The day after the scene referred to by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, I was astonished to find that it was the subject of speculation in the press and complaints. It is right that hon. Members should realise that there are differences of view about it. My view is that, set in context, it was a highly moral scene. A young boy saw his mother having sexual intercourse in the woods and was shaken by what he saw. From that point onwards in the serial one was aware of the traumatic effect that it had had on that young boy. The net effect of that scene, in context, was highly moral, and it takes a rather dirty mind to see it differently.

One consequence of the Bill would be that the publicity about AIDS would lack the freedom that it now has. There are people who believe that the answer to AIDS is one sexual partner, or abstinence from sexual activity. The policies of other people, such as the Secretary of State for Social Services, are more liberal. However, I fear that some of the useful publicity on television would no longer be permitted.

I echo what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Popular (Mr. Mikardo) that Bills, year after year, on this important subject do not lead to sensible discussion and to the right answers. The starting point is whatever the private Member chooses to include in his Bill. We are not generating as much light as we should in such a difficult area. I should prefer a new Williams committee, or a Royal Commission, or another body to set out all the arguments relating to television, after which the House and the country would decide.

Mr. Mellor: The Williams committee covered all the arguments.

Mr. Dubs: It did not cover television. Television has changed the scene; so has cable, which was not even thought of when the Williams committee was considering the problem.

A dispassionate and objective approach is needed. Then we can debate the problem and decide how best to protect those who need to be protected. I do not like the Bill. I shall not support it.

1.50 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) made an interesting speech but I am sure that he and the House will forgive me if I do not pick up the many points he made because time is short. This is an important debate and a large number of hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to contribute. We have heard a two-hour contribution from the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo). As my hon. Friend the Minister said, it was a masterly contribution. That was entirely in order and one pays tribute to his knowledge, expertise and concern about the subject. However, in a limited debate of five hours a speech of two hours from one hon. Member is a grave discourtesy to other Back Benchers on both sides of the House, many of whom have given up constituency engagements to be here today.

The issues raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) in his Bill are important, and I congratulate him on his good fortune in the ballot, on his good sense in the topic chosen and on his courage in bringing back this subject and, hopefully, taking it through the House.

My constituents have surprised me on this issue by the volume of correspondence I have received not from any sort of organised campaign but from genuine individuals who are concerned——

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that exactly the same has occurred in north Tayside, so I would have thought that it was fairly representative of the Scottish view?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for confirmation of the concern in Scotland on this issue. It is interesting that a large number of Scottish Members have been present — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) has spoken.

Mr. Buchan: For greater accuracy, I should say that the hon. Gentleman and I share a border in our constituencies. I have had four letters on the subject.

Mr. Stewart: It may be that the hon. Gentleman's constituents are more selective about the topics on which they write.

Ms. Clare Short: How many letters has the hon. Gentleman had?

Mr. Stewart: There are differences in Scotland. We have our own local press and we have local input to our broadcasting networks. Nevertheless, the concern is the same. I believe that many people feel that we are often subjected to metropolitan and permissive values emanating from an elitist attitude in parts of the London media. The basic view that broadcasting has a role in somehow giving messages and images designed to change thinking and behaviour is one that concerns many people.

There are two major points in my hon. Friend's Bill. He is correct to bring forward an alternative to the "deprave and corrupt" test under the Obscene Publications Act 1959. My understanding of the Bill is the same as that of the hon. Member for Battersea. I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister referred to my hon. Friend's test as a "substitute". As I understand it, it is an alternative. I believe that the existing test satisfies nobody. Libertarians believe that it is too wide, and those at the other end of the spectrum believe that it is too narrow and difficult. The judiciary is clearly unhappy about the law as it stands as

has been made clear by numerous people such as Lord Wilberforce, Lord Justice Booth, and Lord Denning who said that he believes that the Act has misfired.

My hon. Friend's test as to whether an article is "grossly offensive" to "reasonable" people is, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, a test of high standard. It is a test that refers to the concept of a "reasonable person" as embodied in the law. Prosecutions would be subject to the safeguards of the Director of Public Prosecutions being involved.

Many hon. Members have talked about television and violence on television. I agree with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) who pointed to the importance of what one might call the desensitisation process. I believe that the evidence that specific violence on television leads to violent behaviour is rather mixed and uncertain. However, what concerns many people is the fact that over time initial repugnance may turn to acceptance of violent behaviour on television. There is a danger that the acceptance of violence as a means of resolving disputes may change how people view peaceful as against violent behaviour. Violence on television is more dangerous, the more realistic the context in which it is shown.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the importance, good sense and comprehensiveness of the codes and guidelines produced by the IBA and the BBC, but the key to the debate is whether the broadcasters should be the judge and jury in their own cause. That is the key to how hon. Members should vote on Second Reading. The Bill would make the broadcasting authorities more accountable for any departures from their guidelines and statutory duties. It represents a practical way in which aggrieved members of the public can challenge decisions to broadcast, with the safeguards to which my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood referred.

We should give the Bill a Second Reading. It addresses an important problem, which concerns many people of all political persuasions throughout the United Kingdom. I support it.

1.55 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): When one discusses morality in the House, one is in danger of getting into a complicated situation because everybody defines morality in a completely different way. One man's morality is somebody else's prudishness. One woman's morality is frequently regarded by the male of the species as unrealistic and unacceptable. Thus it is always worrying to see the House of Commons addressing itself to a major change in legislation on the basis of its moral stance.

I am always concerned that the House, at a time when we face real problems in the economy, still finds an enormous amount of time in which to debate changes which, in some instances, take us back to circumstances in the theatre in the days of the Lord Chamberlain's Office, and into a form of censorship which owes its existence not to a close and fairly balanced examination of the material, but to a number of highly subjective tests.

When I was a junior Minister, one of the first things that I was told by lawyers, who are the bane of any lay Member's life, was that the things that should be looked for with great care in any legislation were that it was carefully written, that it meant what it said, that it did not include phrases such as "deemed to be", that it was not capable of two types of interpretation, and that when presented to the House it would not be rejected on the basis that it was not common sense. I therefore find it depressing when, at the end of a week that has not been noticeable for the balanced nature of its discussion, we come to another Bill that is highly subjective in the way in which it is interpreted.

I listened with great care to what the Minister said. I hoped that he would take it upon himself to answer many of the points that have particularly concerned my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) and those of us who see the Bill as an exceedingly woolly and dangerous catch-all piece of legislation. I am sorry to say to the Minister, whom I respected very much for the stand that he took on the Bill last year, that I did not find the same clarity of thought or even of expression in his speech today——

Mr. Cash: Shame.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Let me explain what I mean. I do not say that in any spirit of personal criticism. I say it because I came here to have from the Government an explanation of how they view what I regard as a defective piece of legislation.

During the debate, Opposition Members raised specific points. Let me give just one example. I am not at all clear whether the Minister still accepts that, under the legislation if it goes through in its present form, we shall have two definitions — the old "deprave and corrupt" and the new definition. If that is so, does the Minister accept that it is the proper way to proceed? I imagined that he would set out for us not only the Department's view but the Government's view of where the Bill was legally defective. I am sorry to say that I did not find that in his speech.

Indeed, the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth)—I am glad to see that he has rejoined us — acknowledged that the legislation was defective, because he said that if there was a problem we could change the Bill in Committee. That is exactly what happened last year with the Bill that was introduced by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill). We found ourselves in an extraordinary position. Hon. Members came to Second Reading and voted on what they thought was the text of a Bill that would deal with obscenity. It contained the famous laundry list, and was rapidly seen to be embarrassingly laughable. It then went to Committee, where the hon. Member for Davyhulme altered it twice. He also accepted amendments on Third Reading, so the Bill was changed again at that point. He then expected the same number of hon. Members to support his legislation, even though it was clearly wholly different from that on which they had originally voted.

The present Bill is much wider in its implications and seems equally defective in its drafting. The first time that a specific point was raised, the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood said that if there was a major defect we should not worry about it too much, as we could change it in Committee. I am delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman, whom I always treat with politeness.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: I shall endeavour to show the same courtesy to the hon. Lady, despite the fact that she tried to interrupt me when I was making my speech.

I was not responding to the first criticism that was voiced in the Chamber. When I introduced the Bill, I made

[Mr. Gerald Howarth]

it clear that I was responding to criticisms that had been made to me by, for example, the Booksellers Association of Great Britain and Ireland and the British Videogram Association. I am sure that the hon. Lady would think me unreasonable if I were not willing to listen to reasoned argument.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I might think the hon. Gentleman unreasonable, but not on that basis. He is saying that, since the Bill was printed, its defects have become clear, and he has received representations about them from the people who would be affected by the legislation. If so, the point that I am making is still valid.

The legislation is so badly flawed that those who will be affected have had to go to the hon. Gentleman, even before Second Reading, to ask him whether he has realised the implications of what he is doing, and whether he would be prepared to alter the Bill.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Lady knows the rules about moving amendments within the scope of a Bill. As amendments can be made to a Bill, that is in order, and is a well-known procedure in all Committees at all times.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman witnessed the hilarious proceedings on the previous Bill, so he knows that it is not a matter of moving amendments, but of altering a fundamental flaw. That is quite different.

Mr. Chris Smith: To say that a Bill is amendable in Committee—naturally, it is—is a dangerous argument. My hon. Friend will recall that I moved an amendment to last year's Bill in Committee to delete radio from the provisions that covered television and radio. Despite the fact that the sponsor of the Bill admitted that he had no complaint to make about anything that had ever gone out over the radio, he said that because the Bill had been passed in that form on Second Reading, it had to include radio. That is a dangerous argument to accept at this stage.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I strongly support the views of my hon. Friend, who has put his finger on the nub of one of the problems of the legislation. I have no legal training, so I want to know from the Minister whether the scope of the Bill includes basic, important services such as news and current affairs programmes.

I should like to draw to the Minister's attention clause 1(1)*(a)* which will be the same test set out in a different way but which, broadly speaking, applies to sex, drugs and violence. The emphasis of the debate has been different in one fundamental respect from previous debates, because the last time that such legislation was discussed there was a great deal of debate about sex and blasphemy but we did not hear a great deal from Conservative Members about violence. Indeed, it was Opposition Members who time and time again raised the matter of those who find sexual acts perverse and obscene but were not prepared to accept that violence in itself could be equally obscene and equally damaging and something to be discussed in the House.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I made a long speech last time but I have not been able to make even a short speech this time. I assure the hon. Lady that I was one of many Conservative Members who agreed with her about violence. It is violence that we should be addressing today, especially violence in young people and children. That is a bigger problem than the one which can be addressed by self-restraint through the operation of an on-off button by an adult.

Mrs. Dunwoody: In that case I should like to know whether the Bill will apply to news and current affairs programmes. Perhaps I can outline some of my worries. In some ways there seems to be a distinct air of unreality about our debates on obscenity. As the Minister knows, in a short time we shall face an explosion of technological change of such magnitude that we will not need to worry about videos. Beamed into Britain from satellites we shall have programmes over which we shall have no control. Their content will not be balanced in the way that our home-produced material is balanced. We shall have no control at all over the political content of those programmes, and religious sects—I use the expression lightly — could buy air time in order to beam into Britain American cults or cults of any other nationality. Those programmes will go out on our airwaves hour after hour and we will have no control at all over their content.

Do we come to the House to debate legislation about what we intend to do in the short time before that happens to change or try to control the kind of material that will be transmitted? No, we do not. Instead, we talk about how we must control the material, even material shown late at night, because some children know how to use the on-off switch on a video recorder and may therefore see material that was transmitted late at night.

Mr. Buchan: The arguments in favour of the Bill come from Conservative Members. Through their endorsement of the basic principles of the Peacock report and the Green Paper which has about 10 different Conservative views expressed within it, they are surrendering. We are asked if we can do anything about it. Conservatives are handing it over and away from our control altogether. It is not impossible to deal with this and it will be dealt with, but only if we win the election.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am worried about precisely that point. The Bill is so widely drawn that it has all sorts of catch-all provisions. I shall outline some of the things that worry me. If this Bill becomes law there would be problems, with a current affairs programme dealing, for example, with the sexuality of young mentally handicapped people. This is a problem well-known to medical authorities and to those who have to manage mentally handicapped youngsters who are physically well-developed. As I understand it, that programme, if it honestly and accurately examined that sexuality, would find itself, under the terms of this Bill, being described as likely to cause gross offence to some person who viewed it. Indeed, if the interpretation is correct, the programme would not have to be transmitted. It may simply have been put in the can and some publicity put out about its content. After that, some other person could take action to say that it should not be put on to the television screen. If that is the position, we are moving very close to specific censorship. I am worried about the climate in which much of this legislation is being discussed.

In a sense, the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) gave us an honest indication of the attitude of some hon. Members in one of his earlier interventions. He said that even though the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, etc.) (Amendment) Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Davyhulme was not acceptable to the House

and was found to be defective, the broadcasting authorities changed their guidelines and brought forth stronger guidelines. The hon. Member for Stafford seemed to say that we wanted them to know that we are not satisfied with that and that we will require further changes. That was my interpretation of his remarks.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Member for Poplar and Bow (Mr. Mikardo) suggested that the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, etc.) (Amendment) Bill had had no effect. In response, I said that it had. The guidelines had been changed. However, my criticism was that we should not simply rely on the guidelines. We must consider the Acts and the consistency in the Acts. We should also consider the code especially in respect of the IBA. Many points about contracts must be sorted out to ensure that producers comply with the requirements laid down by the BBC and the IBA. The whole matter must be properly examined. This Bill will help materially to solve a problem that affects many people.

Mrs. Dunwoody: However, the hon. Member for Stafford called in aid the whole question of the guidelines. He read a quote, which I paraphrase, stating, "Of course, this will not affect editorial control, but, in effect, it is a guideline, not a rigid set of rules." That is not only highly responsible, it is the logical way to respond. The programme makers will then be aware of the lines within which they must operate. They will know that constraints upon them exist. They will also know that what they are interested in will be debated by the general public. Frankly, I do not think that this Bill will lead us on to a better examination of the problems of censorship, violence or of those things that people find morally unacceptable. Indeed, it will do the very opposite.

The Minister quoted at length from the Williams report. I find it very sad that a report that I found very interesting and useful, which the House did not choose to act upon, which has lain fallow all these years, is now called in aid, not for a Bill on the subject which the Committee examined, but for a Bill about television, which it did not encompass.

If the Minister was to say that the Government cannot accept this legislation, but will set up either an in-depth examination — I would prefer a Select Committee although I see no reason why we should not have a Royal Commission if that was acceptable — on the whole impact of violence on television or of programmes that contain sex or other material which people find unacceptable, I would be prepared to say that progress could be made with the Bill. The depressing point is that that is not the basis upon which we are debating this legislation. We are debating it because we are in the run-up to a general election.

Mr. Nicholls: Most of what the hon. Lady has said, with the exception of that latter point, has some considerable force. Work can be done on this matter in future. No Conservative Member would say that the Obscene Publication Acts are satisfactory. However, that is a matter for the future, as the hon. Lady has said. Surely the problem that we must cope with today is that, uniquely, the broadcasting authorities are not subject to the criminal law of the land as anyone else would be if they were handling material of that kind. Unless the hon. Lady is saying that she is dissatisfied with the Obscene Publications Acts and wants them swept away in their entirety, she should say "Yes, I want those things in the future, but today I will ensure that the criminal law applies to everyone."

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Obscene Publications Acts are still being used for the seizure of obscene printed material. The Minister did not have figures for the years after 1985, but in that year they were used to seize material coming into the country. I have no objection to them. My objection is different. As a drama student, I saw at close quarters the absurdity of the Lord Chamberlain's Office trying to control material that went into the theatres. I am sure that the censors were well-meaning, cultured and nice people, but they did nothing other than interpret what they thought would be offensive. At that time, their definition of offensive was so wide that the words "bloody", which some hon. Members used this morning, would have raised almost as many hackles as some of the explicit scenes.

Over a period, the Lord Chamberlain's Office accepted that it had reached the bizarre position of looking at scripts and saying, "We cannot envisage that as it is written. It will have to be changed." Gradually, the office, and the majority of Members of Parliament, came to accept that that was not the way to operate. A completely different set of controls operates in relation to the IBA and the BBC. The BBC charter and the IBA have specific ways——

Mr. Cash: The annex to the charter.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman is being very pedantic, but I stand corrected. The annex to the BBC charter has specific ways of controlling the broadcasting of material. It is clear that the House should debate such matters on the basis of informed comment. We are told that some hon. Members have received some letters of objection. Although it is always throwing caution to the winds to say it, I have received no letters about the Bill. I have received hundreds of letters about what the Government are doing to the railway workshops in my constituency and about the changes to the royal ordnance factories, but I have not received one letter about the Obscene Publications Bill. When I was a member of the Committee that discussed the Obscene Publications (Protection of Children, etc.) (Amendment) Bill last year, the letters that I received were notable only for their intense amusement at the remarks made by some members of the Committee. We must put the matter into perspective.

The fact that the matter is subjective was clearly shown when the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood and the Minister differed as to whether "The Singing Detective" would have been caught by the legislation. That highlights the dangers of such a Bill. It is not just a matter of someone coming here on a Friday morning, laying down a series of his prejudices and saying, "I want to see changes in the law which would make it impossible for people to swear, for anyone to show sexual acts or for anyone to indulge in an act of violence." It is much more dangerous. It is a catch-all provision which goes much wider——

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The hon. Lady has got it completely wrong. At present, there is a subjective test, because the censors impose their view of what is acceptable, not that of the general public. The Bill proposes to substitute an objective test of what a reasonable man's opinion would

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be, as decided by a jury. That would be decided in a court of law, not behind closed doors, as at present, from which there is no appeal. At present, someone else imposes his opinion on the rest of us.

Mrs. Dunwoody: That is not so. Let me draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the wording of the Bill, which goes much wider than that and concerns me greatly. The Bill states that when a person publishes an article or any further publication that a reasonable person would regard as grossly offensive it shall be

"deemed for the purposes of the 1959 Act to be an obscene article".

The Bill specifies, in a wider context, what will be caught by the provisions. It states that one can be convicted on the basis of alternative tests of obscenity. Therefore, there are two layers of law.

I want answers to my questions, not because I want to see the Obscene Publications Act done away with or want to see violence perpetuated, night after night, on our television screens, but because I do not want the House of Commons to accept legislation that will not do what it purports to do. In fact, it will act as a censor on a purely political—non-party—basis on all sorts of material that television should have the right and indeed the duty to broadcast all the time. I am deeply concerned about that. I had hoped that the Minister would explain what was meant by clause 4(2) which states that:

"It is hereby declared that where a person has an article in his ownership, possession or control . . . the article is an obscene article . . . deemed for the purpose of the 1959 Act to be an obscene article"

That is a wide, catch-all provision. If the Bill receives a Second Reading we shall argue about it for many hours in Committee. It is the sort of legislation that will be totally rewritten, not once but several times and will, on final analysis, be rejected by the House of Commons. Even at its worst, the House does not want to see legislation on the statute book that could be brought into disrepute.

In the final analysis legislation about obscenity must be workable otherwise it will be constantly mocked by those who are not concerned to maintain decent standards. It will be carried to its extreme by those who simply bring it into disuse by bringing it into disrepute. If Conservative Members are serious in their wish to provide a proper Bill they should accept that.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Does the hon. Lady accept that many people believe that this Bill, to use her phrase, is "a proper Bill"? Many people are concerned about the damage done to the minds of young people by obscenity that appears so often in literature and elsewhere. This Bill will do a great deal to calm the apprehensions felt at present by many parents and others.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I object to this Bill because it will not do that. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will read what the Bill says. It is no use saying that we are setting at rest the legitimate fears of parents or those in control of young people. The Bill will provide legislation which will, I believe, have one effect, a political effect.

I believe that the BBC has responded to the attacks made upon it by the Conservative party. That is clear in the BBC's choice of people who appear on its programmes. It is certainly true of its editorial policy. Those of us who regularly listen to news programmes and current affairs programmes have detected a distinct shift in the way in which the editorial policy of the BBC is currently operated. That is in response to pressure from the House.

Mr. Nicholls: Does the hon. Lady accept that in one sense at last the Bill would help the broadcasting authorities because, instead of being responsible under guidelines which cannot be policed, they will be able to say, "Don't keep on about it. We are subject to the criminal law like everybody else. Go to the Director of Public Prosecutions and see if you can persuade him."

Mrs. Dunwoody: That would not happen because the DPP would be under constant pressure to prosecute. That has an effect, but if there were constant prosecutions, the authorities would be taken to court and even if they were found not guilty, as in the" Lady Chatterley's Lover" case, the state and the people concerned would have to spend a good deal of money and endure time under pressure to no end. We must go directly to the programme makers and make the points, backed with proper information.

Mr. Cash: Neither the code nor the guidelines have been implemented and in many respects they are defective. That is why the Bill is required. The hon. Lady has been involved in the discussion for two years running and she must know that.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It is precisely because I have been involved for two years running that I know that this Bill is worse than the Bill that was thrown out. The hon. Member for Stafford contradicts himself. He says that the BBC has taken notice of the proceedings on the previous Bill and is therefore operating differently, but he also says that because it has taken notice we must introduce more legislation to insist upon it changing its ways. It is extremely dangerous for any House of Commons to seek to limit in that way the editorial freedom of the broadcasting authorities when we already have legitimate controls on those authorities.

Ms. Clare Short: Does my hon. Friend agree that the constant repetition of sanitised violence is not dealt with by the Bill because it will lead to searching for gross, extreme and unusual violent occurrences? The second problem is the offensive portrayal of womens' bodies, with which the Bill does not deal. That is why the Bill is objectionable. It does not deal with the two significant problems that concern people.

Mrs. Dunwoody: My hon. Friend has been in the Chamber all day and wants to see whether the Bill reflects in any way the ten-minute Bill which she introduced and which was discussed at length with various women's organisations. That Bill wanted some recognition by the House of Commons of the reality of the portrayal of women in the media, which constantly downgrades and degrades them. To the female of the species that is just as unacceptable as many of the matters which have been mentioned today.

The real difficulty with the Bill is that if it were passed it would not produce a clear set of standards that could be easily understood by the broadcasting authorities but would create a miasma of suspicion. It is possible to create a climate in which broadcasters respond, not to the legitimate interests of those whom we wish to protect from

offensive material but almost in advance to what they see as political pressures. That becomes clear whenever we debate such legislation—

Mr. Gerald Howarth *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 170, Noes 16.

Division No. 134] **[2.29 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Greenway, Harry
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Sumberg, David
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allan Stewart and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Boyes, Roland
Brinton, Tim
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Howells, Geraint
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Mikardo, Ian
Prescott, John
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Wareing, Robert

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Norman Buchan and
Mr. George Howarth.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 160 Noes 23

Division No. 135] **[2.40 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James A.
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan

Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mariand, Paul
Mather, Sir Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Sumberg, David
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allan Stewart and
Mr. Neil Hamilton.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Brinton, Tim
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dobson, Frank
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley, N)*
Howells, Geraint
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Mikardo, Ian
Prescott, John
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Wareing, Robert

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Norman Buchan and
Mr. Tony Banks.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Private Members' Bill

PENSIONERS' RIGHT TO FUEL AND COMMUNICATIONS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 1 May.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Under which Standing Order can an hon. Member, while seated, mumble an objection to a Bill? Is it not an obscenity that a Bill that would improve the living standards of 9 million people and end standing charges can be held up in this way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have the hon. Gentleman's point of order. He will know, as he has been here on a Friday on previous occasions, that what has taken place is perfectly in order. Perhaps it is as well that I remind the House that this happens not only to private Members' Bills but to Government legislation. If the hon. Gentleman, or any other hon. Member, is dissatisfied with the present procedure, I suggest that he puts his views to the Select Committee on Procedure and asks it to consider the matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is another way of looking at the matter. If you will bear with me, you will understand my argument.

On Fridays, we start at 9.30 am, earlier than on any other day——

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The hon. Gentleman was not here.

Mr. Skinner: I was here, I am here more often than the hon. Gentleman. He should look at my voting record.

We start at 9.30 am and finish our normal business at 2.30 pm. We then have half an hour for the Adjournment debate. It is time that the House considered extending its business on Fridays, so that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) can get his Bill through to look after the 9·5 million pensioners in Britain. If the Prime Minister can have free heating and free light and pay no rates at No. 10 Downing street and at Chequers——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat when I am on my feet. I can say nothing further to the hon. Gentleman or to the House. There is a Select Committee on Procedure, and hon. Members are perfectly entitled to put their points to that Committee.

Mr. Skinner: Old women are being attacked. The hon. Gentleman ought to be ashamed of himself. The Prime Minister has just come back from Russia——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

I appeal to the House. We have more business to transact. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), who has the Adjournment debate, is still waiting to move his motion. I am not prepared to accept any more points of order unless they are on other matters.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd)

refused to stand and object to the Bill, and to say why he believes that pensioners should continue to die of cold every winter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that hon. Members feel strongly about this issue but it is an abuse of our procedure to try to debate Bills at this time when objection has been taken. I have given advice to the hon. Gentleman about what he should do if he does not like the present procedure, and I invite him to put his point to the Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Wareing: No, it is not on the same point of order. You must have seen, as we all did, an old lady being manhandled——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that it is not in order to refer to what is going on in the Galleries.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I heard what you said to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing). I have reason to believe that the lady to whom he referred lives in my borough. I should like to know what remedy is available to me, as the Member of Parliament for Southwark and Bermondsey, to make sure that her treatment is properly inquired into. I shall be grateful for your ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As is always the case on these occasions, a report will be made to Mr. Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman has any points to raise, I suggest that he should not raise them now, but should get in touch with Mr. Speaker.

LEASEHOLD REFORM BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 1982 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman is being very unfair to the House. I have heard him on two points of order and I have explained the procedure to him. He is now delaying the rest of the Orders of the Day, and above all he is being very unfair to the hon. Member who has the Adjournment debate, who happens to be one of his hon. Friends.

Second Reading what day? No day named.

LAW OF PROPERTY (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 June.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (EMPTY COUNCIL HOUSES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PRIVATE SECURITY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PROTECTION OF SHAREHOLDERS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 April.

DISABLED PERSONS' RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday May 15.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may be aware of the fact that early-day motion 758, which has been signed by 70 hon. Members from various parties, calls for this legislation to be debated and voted on. The House of Commons has never had the opportunity to vote on this principle. I know that the Select Committee on Procedure is my next port of call, but can you advise me whether it is possible for the Select Committee to deal with the rights of disabled people and anti-discrimination legislation before the general election?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It is not for me to advise the hon. Gentleman on tactics. He is a sufficiently experienced parliamentarian to find some way to raise the matter, as well as putting his points to the Select Committee on Procedure.

CONTROL OF MERGERS (WALES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PRESCRIPTION (SCOTLAND) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Bill read a Second time.

Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Committee—

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I should inform the House that it is not possible to object on this motion, but it is in order to divide the House, if hon. Members so wish.

Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House:—

The House proceeded to a Division —

There being no Members willing to act as Tellers for the Noes, Mr. Deputy Speaker declared that the Ayes had it.

[Sir Paul Dean]

Question accordingly agreed to.
Committee on Friday 24 April.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1986 (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): With the permission of the Member in charge of the Bill, Friday 24 April.

BILLIARDS (ABOLITION OF RESTRICTIONS) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Incinerators (Toxic Emissions)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have proposed the Question. The hon. Gentleman is now taking time out of the Adjournment, which I am sure he does not intend to do.

3.2 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): My interest in the subject was prompted by a proposal by Urban Waste and Power Ltd to construct a power generation and resource recovery unit on a site in Stonebridge lane in Liverpool, adjacent to the Kirkby part of my constituency. Initially, local residents with my support and with that of the local authority, Knowsley borough council, raised objections. However, in the event, Liverpool city council granted planning permission.

Although I have no reason to belive that anything irregular has taken place in the procedures, I am concerned that a letter of 10 December 1986 from the chief environmental officer of Liverpool was not given weight in the procedure. He said:

"I am somewhat doubtful that my officers, or those of HM's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate could enforce adequate and effective control of the emissions by plant management. The use of limestone and fluidised bed is mentioned. However, I assume that this may place an additional operating cost against the process, and emission control may be allowed to fall below the appropriate level, thus enhancing the profitability aspect of the operation at the expense of the Merseyside's environment."

Because we were concerned about the precise details of the proposals, residents in the Field lane area of Kirkby and I started to research what was involved in the plant. In the United Kingdom, there are several examples of such plants, although I cannot say with any certainty that the proposal will have the same effect. They are causing serious problems locally. One is in the Rhondda in south Wales and the other is in Runcorn, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes).

On the excellent BBC Radio 4 programme "Face the Facts" on 21 January 1987, a Runcorn resident, Mr. Prince, made the following point, which my constituents and I are worried about. He said:

"I was being woken up in the early hours of the morning feeling nauseous. My daughter was physically sick on two occasions, and my wife and I were constantly complaining of things like headaches, running noses, running eyes, sore throats, etc.".

Although the Runcorn plant is currently closed down, I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton is concerned about the effect that it has had on his constituents. I understand also that the Rhondda plant is currently closed down.

The cause of concern, particularly for my constituents in the Field lane area of Kirkby, arises from their fear that the plant might have a harmful effect on their health. The problem arises from the possible emission of dioxins, which can be produced when household rubbish containing PVC is burned. That process can produce, when attached to cholorine or bromine, chlorinated dibenzofurans, which can be harmful to people's health. The only way in which PVC can be removed or rendered

harmless is by having a sufficient and consistently high burning temperature or by thorough and exhaustive sorting of the rubbish.

One of the foremost experts on the subject, Dr. Alistair Hay of Leeds university, has estimated that a burning temperature of 1,300 deg C. should be high enough, but even in plants that can operate at that temperature, it is difficult, in operation, to ensure that such a temperature is consistently mantained. To sort such waste properly would probably render the process uneconomic as it would require either a large increase in the initial capital costs or a painstaking and costly manual process.

In New York state and in Sweden steps have been taken, because of the alarm at the consequences of dioxin emissions, to control those plants. In Sweden, stringent safety limits have been applied following a 12-month halt in the construction of those plants. In America, unacceptably high levels of dioxin have been found in nursing mothers' milk, because toxic emissions are not just breathed in—they can be ingested through the food that we eat. In New York state equally stringent controls have been applied.

Speaking on the "Face the Facts" programme, the eminent scientist Paul Connett made the following point:

"If you calculate what level of dose you would get from a quart of milk from a cow grazing on grass at the same point that you were breathing, you would get several hundred times as much dioxin exposure from that quart of milk than from breathing the air for a whole day. Put it another way, one quart of milk is equivalent to about eight months of breathing at the same point that the cow is grazing. Now that's a very important point because in the United States when they do a health risk analysis when they're proposing to build a plant, they will base it on what people breathe, and they very seldom calculate what people will be exposed to via the food chains."

I do not believe that anybody in authority could put his hand on his heart and assure my constituents or other interested parties that those processes are safe. Indeed, my constituents are now so concerned that yesterday they picketed and prevented the opening ceremony taking place at the incinerator site.

The *Liverpool Echo*, which is a responsible journal and covers my area, stated yesterday in covering the issue:

"Dioxins have been linked with deformities in babies and cancer and were used in the Vietnam War under the codename Agent Orange to destroy vegetation."

Dr. Alistair Hay tends to support that view, when he concluded:

"People are right to be concerned, and I think governments are getting in on the act rather late in the day. In the meantime we should make sure that we don't generate more dioxin, and all incinerators ought to be thoroughly monitored to ensure that we're not creating a problem for the future."

Ideally, I want all new plants under construction to be stopped, unless and until the public can be assured about the health concerns, which I find most worrying. However, if the Government are unwilling to do that, I ask them to consider some of the following points.

I want the Government to call in all planning consents, including the one that applies to the plant that is adjacent to my constituency, until they can give proper assurances. Failing that, I should like a public inquiry into the proposal, so that the issues can be fully explored and the evidence of experts heard. I want the Minister to introduce a new monitoring and control procedure for the plants, which would set ambient air quality standards, lay down a proper standard for dioxin emissions and monitor stack plume emissions.

My concern, and that of my constituents, is to ensure that the local population, and particularly nursing mothers, are not subjected to any additional health hazards by the unhappy coincidence of living near such plants.

I cannot believe that, as matters stand, such assurances can honestly be given. It is therefore urgent that adequate steps be taken to monitor and control the plant. The health and welfare of my constituents is no less important than those of the people of New York state or of Sweden.

I asked for this debate not out of a wish to generate alarm or to score a party political point, but from a genuine desire to have the subject discussed and action taken to protect my constituents. I hope that the Minister will pursue the matter in the same spirit as that in which I have raised it.

3.12 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) for allowing me to intervene in his Adjournment debate, because the proposed resource recovery and power generation plant that is to be built at Gillmoss is sited in my constituency, although most of the houses in the immediate vicinity happen to be in that of my hon. Friend. Croxteth housing estate in my constituency is, however, only about one mile away and there is much concern in that area.

My information is that the plant will not be so much an incinerator as a high technology boiler, the main aim of which will be to provide sufficient steam to generate electricity. The purpose of the incinerator is to recycle waste into electricity. I believe that the chimney stack is to be 92m high and not, as originally planned, 60m. That was a result of a recommendation of the Health and Safety Executive. The emissions will be monitored, and I understand that permanent apparatus is to be installed. The emissions will be within the current EEC standards, which are higher than those that currently apply in the United Kingdom.

Nevertheless, there is deep disquiet and great public concern in my constituency. My constituents expect some action to be taken to give them the necessary reassurances. Such concern is to be expected in the post-Chernobyl period. Given the amount of misinformation and the many misconceptions about the plant, my constituents need convincing reassurances.

There should be a full public inquiry or, failing that, perhaps the Minister would instigate a departmental inquiry, call in the planning application, examine it fully and make a full statement on the matter.

3.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): In the time that is available it is not possible to go fully into the detail of this issue, which is of importance locally and internationally. The new plants are being constructed to higher standards, for the most part, than the existing ones.

We must not lose sight of the fact that incineration of waste is not new. In 1914, the United Kingdom operated 300 incineration plants. While many incorporated some form of energy recovery, their primary objective was to reduce bulk and to make waste hygienic to handle and dispose of. Typically, in the United Kingdom incineration reduces the volume of waste by 85 per cent., destroying

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

putrescible matter and leaving a largely inert ash. We incinerate 10 per cent. of municipal waste arising in 36 incinerators. Luxembourg incinerates more than 75 per cent. in one incinerator, France 40 per cent. in 200, Denmark 66 per cent. in 48 and Sweden 60 per cent. in 25 incinerators. The practice of waste incineration is widespread but it is less practised in this country than in many others. Obviously, environmental benefits flow from it, although people in the constituencies represented by the hon. Members for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) are anxious about the matter.

The facts about this application are that a planned new privately owned power station burning domestic refuse is to be built by Urban Waste and Power Ltd. in Liverpool, close to the constituency of the hon. Member for Knowsley, North and in the constituency of the hon. Member for West Derby. This is a matter for local decision although under our new proposals this type of plant is of a size to come under the control of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. I understand that Liverpool city council has accepted a recommendation from Her Majesty's district inspector of pollution that the proposed chimney height should be raised to 92m to take account of nearby high-rise flats. I understand that it was the district inspector who made the recommendation and not the Health and Safety Executive.

On the basis of the information provided by the company, the plant appears to offer good combustion control. My technical advisers at the Department of Trade and Industry's Warren Spring laboratory, working under contract to the Department of the Environment, will want to monitor progress carefully. I understand that the Liverpool plant will be fitted with an electrostatic precipitator which, if it is of the right design, ought to offer very high particulate arrestment.

The Government are concerned about incinerators and that is why we have discussed in a consultation paper a proposed new control system. The consultation paper was issued in December and I think that submissions had to be in by March. We hope that the proposals in that paper can be implemented at an early opportunity in the form of legislation or regulations, whichever may be appropriate. An inter-departmental committee is looking at the pollution potential from the combustion of waste and is reviewing the information available on emissions as a first step towards the production of further guidance on incineration.

We began in 1984 a major programme of tests to measure emissions, particularly of dioxins, from municipal incinerators. We are awaiting expert assessment of the significance of dioxins from the DHSS committee on toxicity, a committee consisting of independent experts in the fields of medicines and toxology. Research is also being carried out to establish background levels of dioxins in soils and foliage on a 50 km grid to calculate the contribution of suspected sources. We are awaiting the outcome of our test programmes and of DHSS consideration before setting new regulations.

Results of the tests on 11 incinerators are available and a further three are under test. We intend to take more detailed measurements from three of the well-run incinerators with different gas cooling systems to assess the effects on dioxin production of time turbulence and temperature within the incinerator. We are anxious to keep operators informed of findings to date. Last October officials from the Department of the Environment held a large seminar for all municipal incinerator operators to inform them of the importance of correct maintenance and operation. A further seminar is planned when more is known about the effects of dioxins and how they may be formed.

This is a technical subject but I hope that in the short time available I have been able to demonstrate to the hon. Gentlemen that the Government are taking this seriously and have set up many inquiries into it. The people in the vicinity should not be greatly concerned, because of the care that we take about this and because of the careful monitoring that will be carried out. If the hon. Member for Knowsley, North wishes to discuss this further with technical advisers in my Department, I shall be delighted to facilitate him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 23 March 1987

DEFENCE

Bullying (Army)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding bullying in the Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No direct representations have been received in the Department. However, I should like to state quite emphatically that bullying is not tolerated in the Army. In recent months there have been a number of press reports carrying allegations of bullying. All such cases are thoroughly investigated, and in those few instances where allegations are substantiated, firm disciplinary action is taken against the offenders. In the case of the most recent allegations, concerning incidents at Junior Infantry Battalion Shorncliffe, an Special Investigation Branch investigation is under way, and I have called for reports when inquiries are completed.

RAF Presentation (Boston)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence who invited the Royal Air Force to make a presentation at Boston, Lincolnshire, on Tuesday 17 February.

Mr. Freeman: The presentation was arranged following correspondence between the Royal Air Force presentation team and the mayor of Boston. It is normal practice for the presentation to be offered to a variety of local authorities, education institutions and other organisations some time in advance. A presentation is only given where a favourable response is received.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what subjects and issues were covered in the Royal Air Force presentation at Boston, Lincolnshire, on Tuesday 17 February.

Mr. Freeman: A standard presentation was given on the role and capability of the Royal Air Force against the background of United Kingdom defence policy and membership of NATO. As is usual, the presentation was followed by questions on a number of subjects.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence who undertook the Royal Air Force presentation at Boston, Lincolnshire, on Tuesday 17 February on behalf of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: The Royal Air Force presentation team.

Service Presentations (Policy)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance is issued to service personnel on the political content and handling of politically controversial subjects within presentations they make on behalf of the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Royal Air Force presentation team is comprehensively briefed on all subjects likely to arise in the course of a season, updated whenever necessary, to ensure that the content of the presentation and answers to subsequent questions are consistent with Government defence policy. I have no reason to doubt the integrity or ability of the team to deal with controversial subjects which may arise in the course of a presentation.

Recruitment and Discharges

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence, in the last year for which figures are available, how many soldiers enlisted at the ages of *(a)* 16 years, *(b)* 17 years and *(c)* 18 years; and what proportion had discharged themselves before serving (i) three months, (ii) six months and (iii) 12 months.

Mr. Freeman: In the financial year 1985-86, the numbers of soldiers enlisted at ages 16, 17 and 18 were as follows:

	Number
Age 16	7,106
Age 17	3,310
Age 18	2,475

Of these, the following percentages obtained discharge as of right during the first six months of their service:

	Per cent.
Age 16 at entry	21·1
Age 17 at entry	18·9
Age 18 at entry	15·0

Statistics are not readily available of the numbers in each age group obtaining discharge during the first three months or between seven and 12 months of service, and the information could only be obtained with disproportionate effort and cost.

Cruelty and Brutality

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints have been made about cruelty or brutality in the armed forces in each of the last four years.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally and could only be collected with disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence in how many cases in each of the last four years disciplinary proceedings have been taken because of unfair, cruel or brutal treatment in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: I shall reply shortly.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to investigate allegations of cruelty and brutality in the armed forces; and whether the results of any inquiries will be published.

Mr. Freeman: All allegations of cruelty or brutality in the armed forces are fully investigated. Appropriate disciplinary and redress of grievance procedures exist to deal with them.

Investigation reports are not normally published but the results are made available on request.

Military Schools of Music

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the future of military schools of music.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) announced in July 1984 that a defence school of music would be formed at Deal, combining there the present separate music schools of the Royal Marines, the Army and the Royal Air Force. Subsequently, however, a number of uncertainties arose, not least in relation to the cost of creating a DSM, and following the publication of the 11th report from the Committee of Public Accounts Session 1985-86, my noble Friend the then Minister for Defence Support announced on 12 February 1986 in another place that the Ministry of Defence was setting in hand, with the assistance of consultants, a thorough review of all the options for training service musicians, including rentention of the present arrangements. Arthur Young was awarded the contract for this study in March 1986.

Arthur Young submitted its report in July 1986. In addition valuations of the relevant sites were obtained from independent firms of surveyours, who consulted officers of the planning authorities concerned. In the light of this information, consideration has since been given to how service musicians should be trained in future.

The consultants' report shows that the estimated cost, on a discounted cash flow basis, of keeping the existing three separate schools of music—at Deal for the Royal Marines, at Kneller hall for the Army and at Uxbridge for the RAF—is £56·85 million, over a 15-year period and that, on the same basis, the estimated cost of a DSM at Deal is £51·25 million. A DSM at Deal thus offers a saving of a net present value of £5·6 million over 15 years compared with the status quo. None of the other options considered, such as a DSM at Eastney barracks in Portsmouth or at Redford barracks in Edinburgh or rebuilding a school at Deal for the Royal Marines, offers any worthwhile saving over the cost of the status quo.

The above figures do not include provision for the optional additional facilities of a drill shed, bandstand and concert hall, although some of these facilities are at the existing schools of music. The total estimated cost of these facilities at a combined school is £500,000 to £1·5 million, depending on whether a concert hall is provided by converting an existing building or constructing a new one. The consultants considered that a DSM at Deal was the cheapest way of providing these facilities.

The consultants also reviewed the social factors such as employment issues which Ministers took into account when they made the original decision in 1984. They reported that these were not of major significance but marginally favoured a DSM at Deal.

In all our consideration of this complex issue we have had in mind the effect on service morale of abandoning proven and respected schools of music in favour of creating a joint establishment which might not in the end show itself to be responsive to particular single service needs. This factor is not a new one: of its nature it is intangible and unquantifiable but, however indefinable, we recognise it is of much significance and has to be considered against the opportunity of financial advantage in a single school of music offered by the prospect of savings both from the disposal of land no longer needed and in operating costs.

The financial benefits, however, would arise in the longer term and to secure these savings a capital investment of nearly £10 million would be needed. If the scheme went ahead straight away, these costs would be likely to fall in 1990-91 and 1991-92, and while the DSM at Deal would offer the prospect of long-term savings, over the first five years it would involve additional expenditure of nearly £8 million at net present value over the status quo. Moreover, in any project of this kind there is bound to be some uncertainty about the final outcome in respect of both expenditure and savings.

The background against which the short term impact of investment in the DSM at Deal has had to be considered is that, as was indicated in the 1987 public expenditure White Paper, the defence budget is declining in real terms. The overall budgetary position now is therefore significantly different from that which existed at the time of the original decision in 1984. There are now many more competing demands within the defence programme for the available resources. To accommodate the early capital expenditure which would be needed at Deal, high priority items already in the defence programme would have to be postponed or forgone.

Whether in these circumstances to proceed with the DSM at Deal is a finely balanced judgment, but we have concluded that the savings that the scheme would eventually produce are not so large as to justify setting aside the effect on service morale and the measures that would have to be taken in order to find the necessary short term capital at a time of general budgetary constraint. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has decided therefore not to form a defence school of music at Deal and that the training of service musicians should accordingly continue to be carried out where it is undertaken now. This decision will enable us to proceed with the disposal of the sites at Eastney and Redford barracks, Edinburgh and to consider how best to make effective use of the MOD land and buildings at Deal for the continued use of the Royal Marines.

Submarines (Safety)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis the countermeasure zones in the public safety schemes for nuclear-powered submarines at Vickers shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness and Devonport dockyard were set at their current limits; if there are any plans to change them in the light of the higher fission product inventory at Devonport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My Department's contingency plans are based on an assessment of the magnitude of releases to the atmosphere associated with various reactor accidents scenarios, and the probability of their occurring. Since it is inconceivable that a reactor accident on one submarine would result in a reactor accident aboard another, the source term release is not cumulative where more than one submarine is present.

The counter-measure zone in the public safety scheme for all naval bases and for the Vickers shipbuilding yard at Barrow is based on the assessment that, within a circular zone of 550 metres radius centred on the submarine, counter-measures will be taken automatically as soon as a reactor accident occurs; that all people remaining within the zone have been given instructions on what they should do; and that, provided they follow these instructions, no people within the zone should exceed any of the upper emergency reference levels of dose specified by the National Radiological Protection Board, and the majority

should not exceed any of the lower levels of dose specified by the National Radiological Protection Board. There are no plans to change this assessment.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the specific measures that his Department has taken to alleviate the adverse economic and social effects for the Plymouth travel-to-work area resulting from the projected job reductions at Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As my hon. Friend knows, the naval refit and repair programme is a declining one, and we have estimated that, as a result, the job losses at Devonport dockyard alone over the next seven years would amount to some 5,000, of which some 4,000 would be lost by April 1990. The planned introduction of commercial management to Devonport dockyard from 6 April, under a contract signed with Devonport Management Limited (DML) on 24 February, is expected to result in a significantly lower level of job losses, of some 2,300 by 1990, and DML will seek to minimise compulsory redundancies. The biggest single measure that my Department can make, therefore, to alleviating the job losses which would otherwise result from the decline in naval shipwork is the introduction of commercial management as planned.

So far as the current year is concerned, the work load at Devonport is such that selective recruitment is necessary. DML is committed to increasing the Dockyard's efficiency so that in the longer term it can compete, with increasing success, for unallocated Royal Navy work and commercial work, thereby minimising job losses in the Dockyard. DML is also committed to craft and apprentice training and estimates that in 1987 some 125 to 150 apprentices will be required. Wherever practicable, co-operation with local educational and training institutions will be encouraged.

RAF Carlisle

Mr. Ron Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the full cost of the study recently carried out at 14 Maintenance Unit, RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: For reasons of commercial confidentiality we do not disclose the costs of specific studies undertaken for the Department by outside management consultants.

Mr. Ron Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Defence why he used an outside firm of accountants rather than his Department's own staff for the recent study at 14 Maintenance Unit, RAF Carlisle.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The study referred to, covered the whole of the RAF supply management organisation and not just 14 maintenance unit, RAF Carlisle. Decisions on whether to use internal MOD resources or external consultants on studies of this kind are taken on their merits, taking into account factors such as staff resources and availability, relevant expertise, time scale and cost.

Carlisle and Harrogate (Defence Facilities)

Mr. Ron Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, when considering the study of Peak, Marwick of the efficiency and effectiveness of Ministry of Defence facilities at Carlisle and Harrogate, he will take into account the level of unemployment in Carlisle.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The examination of this study, which is likely to take some time, will take all relevant factors into account.

HMS Fife

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the sale of HMS Fife.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Fife is planned to complete her RN operational service at the end of June 1987. Following sales negotiations with prospective customers the ship is expected to be disposed of by sale to another Government, for handover by August 1987.

Alternatively, should this method of disposal not succeed, the vessel will be destored and de-equipped for disposal commercially, probably to a shipbreaker for scrapping.

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the current level of orders with the Royal Ordnance factory at Patricroft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence places its orders with Royal Ordnance plc and with other defence contractors some of whom sub contract work to Royal Ordnance. The loading of individual factories within Royal Ordnance to implement such contracts and sub contracts is a matter for Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his policy toward the timing of orders to Royal Ordnance factories in the light of the protection tendering procedure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The primary objective of our procurement policy is to satisfy the essential requirements of the services in a way that secures the best value for money for the taxpayer. As a matter of good procurement practice, we do however seek to maintain, as far as is practicable, an even ordering pattern to allow efficient production planning by our suppliers.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about redundancy programmes planned or considered at the Royal Ordnance factory, Patricroft.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Employment levels at individual sites of Royal Ordnance plc are a matter for the company.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Defence which companies remain as bidders for the Royal Ordnance Factories plc.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 16 March 1987 at column 376.

Research

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list all research contracts his Department has with universities in the United Kingdom and with Marconi in relation to the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is as follows:

a. *United Kingdom Universities*
None.

b. *Marconi*
A number of SDI research awards (known as letters of offer and acceptance) have been placed on the Ministry of Defence by the United States Government. In turn the majority of the work in each of the study areas has been contracted to British companies by the Ministry of Defence. In this respect the Marconi Company Ltd. is under contract in the following studies:

1. European architecture study.
2. Battle management/comd., control and communications.
3. European test bed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts his Department has with Loughborough university for research; and into what subjects.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has 15 research agreements with Loughborough university covering a range of defence-related topics. It is up to the university itself to decide whether to make further information available.

9 Signal Regiment

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the studies recommended by Mr. Calcutt in his report on the investigations carried out by the service police in the 9 Signal Regiment case have been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: In my statement in the House on 22 May 1986 at columns 558-59 I said that Mr. Calcutt had recommended seven matters for furter consideration, all of which the Government accepted, and that the House would be informed of the outcome of this further work. These studies have now been completed and our conclusions are as follows.

Mr. Calcutt's first matter for consideration concerned the potentital conflict between learning the nature, extent and full circumstances of any breach of security and bringing the offender to justice. Whilst acknowledging that the rules applicable to criminal investigations can, in certain circumstances, inhibit the counter intelligence aspect of espionage inquiries, we have concluded that this is an inevitable consequence of according all suspects the basic rights which the law requires.

Mr. Calcutt also recommended that consideration should be given to the need to give, at an early stage in an investigation, clear guidance on the relative priority to be given to the counter intelligence aspect and the criminal aspect of a security case. We accept the need for this and there are instructions to service units to ensure that any such cases or suspected cases are reported immediately to the Ministry of Defence. These instructions have been reviewed and, where appropriate, are being amended.

Mr. Calcutt recommended that we should consider whether, in certain circumstances, the 48-hour maximum period allowed under current service procedures for suspects to be detained without charge should be capable of being extended. We have concluded that in present circumstances such an extension would not be justified.

Mr. Calcutt's fourth recommendation was to consider whether RAF Queen's Regulation 1034, which deals with forms of custody, should be either annulled or amended. We have concluded that this regulation, which Mr. Calcutt found to be of doubtful utility and obscure in its meaning, should be deleted and replaced by appropriate amendments to other regulations in QR(RAF) so as to remove any ambiguity about the special circumstances which it was originally intended to cover.

Mr. Calcutt recommended that consideration be given to how far the rigid application of the need to know principle may have the effect of depriving a suspect of the protection which the law provides for him. We have considered this and have concluded that, whenever practicable in future security cases, persons under investigation should not be placed under the command of officers who do not hold the appropriate security clearance and that suitably cleared legal advisers and investigators should be available. Instructions to service units are being amended as necessary.

Mr. Calcutt's sixth recommendation was to consider whether the routine documentation in security investigations might itself give rise to security considerations. We have reviewed our existing rules and have concluded that no amendments are needed; existing procedures provide for such documentation to be given a security classification where necessary.

Mr. Calcutt's last recommendation was to consider whether investigations such as those leading up to the Cyprus case trial should be conducted from the United Kingdom rather than overseas. We have concluded that, for practical reasons, such investigations should be carried out in situ, but that they should be directed and coordinated from the Ministry of Defence. A contact point in the Ministry will be nominated for this purpose in any future case.

Mr. Avtar Singh-Gida

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will initiate an inquiry into the possible security implications of the disappearance of Avtar Singh-Gida, a researcher into strategic defence initiative-related subjects at Loughborough university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Mr. Avtar Singh-Gida's disappearance is a matter for the police. He was engaged on an unclassified research agreement for the MOD at Loughborough university on matters unrelated to the strategic defence initiative studies.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Pesticides

Sir Richard Body asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the species of animals used in the United Kingdom for testing the safety of pesticides.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available information, which relates to 1985, is published in table 2 of "Statistics of experiments on living animals, Great Britain 1985" (Cmnd. 9839), a copy of which is in the library. Corresponding figures for Northern Ireland are not available.

EC Nationals (Residence)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy on European Economic Community proposals on a right of residence for European Economic Community nationals in the territory of another member state; if this right would involve a right to vote; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals are under discussion in the European Economic Community on a right of residence for European Economic Community nationals in the territory of another member state.

Mr. Waddington: A draft directive on a right of residence was first put forward by the Commission in 1979. The current text, which is under discussion in the Council of Ministers, is designed to provide a right of residence throughout the European Community to those nationals of member states who do not already have such a right under the free movement provisions of the treaty of Rome. The Government favour the principle of a right of residence providing that it is conditional upon a person having the resources to support himself, without recourse to public funds, in the host state.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives the Home Office crime prevention unit is providing in the field of crime prevention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The crime prevention unit will continue to stimulate and encourage a very wide range of activity aimed at involving the whole community in crime prevention. These at present include: strengthening the crime prevention element in central government policies, through the ministerial group on crime prevention; encouraging the private sector to engage more fully in crime prevention work; devising a new publicity campaign as part of an increased publicity budget of £4·8 million; working with the local authority associations and the police to establish a travelling conference to promote local crime prevention activity; completing research projects on a range of topics including aspects of autocrime, commercial robbery and crime in the inner city; and considering the problems of young people and crime by, among other things, the setting up of three new working groups to report to standing conference on crime prevention in November 1987.

Wapping Dispute

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received representations from Edinburgh district trades council about the Wapping dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None of which I am aware.

Cruelty to Animals

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce legislation to provide Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals' inspectors with the authority to enter a house where he or she has reason to believe that a dog or other animal is being ill-treated.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government applaud the fine work done by the RSPCA in the field of animal welfare. However, any increase in powers of entry is a considerable infringement of personal liberty and we do not believe it would be right to give the society's inspectors a power of entry in cases of possible cruelty to animals.

Metropolitan Police District (Properties)

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his reply on Monday 16 March to the question from the hon. Member for Fulham, *Official Report*, column *356*, if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the 573 residential properties owned by the Metropolitan police which are currently empty in the Metropolitan police district are brought back into use.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis keeps the level of vacant property under constant review. He informs me that, of the 573 residential quarters currently vacant, 117 are in the process of being sold; 64 have been allocated to tenants who will occupy them shortly; and 90 are in the process of being allocated to tenants. The balance is being assessed for sale or for essential remedial works before allocation.

Aliens

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the fees charged for registration and naturalisation of aliens; what is the proportion by which that fee has been abated; and if he will publish the work sheets which form the basis of the calculation of costs to the police.

Mr. Waddington: The current fees are in the schedule to the British Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 1986. Fees are set to recover the full cost of processing applications, except for those which are not successful where applicants pay on average less than 10 per cent. of the full cost. Police costs are derived from information provided by police forces about the actual cost of dealing with the inquiries which are referred to them. We do not propose to publish all the detailed workings, but the cost of police work, together with the work of the immigration service, has been published in the nationality fees memorandum and trading account for 1985-86, a copy of which is in the Library.

Women's Rights

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policies are being implemented by Her Majesty's Government to promote the rights of women.

Mr. Waddington: Our policies for promoting equality of opportunity between men and women will be set out in full in a document to be published shortly as the Government's response to the "Forward Looking Strategies" drawn up at the United Nations conference in Nairobi. Some information on current and past initiatives in the Home Office which have benefited women was given in my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Barking (Miss Richardson), on 18 December 1986 at columns 652-53; similar information for other

Departments was given by other Ministers in reply to similar questions from the same hon. Member on 15 December at columns 399-400; 16 December, at columns 494-96, 433-34, 445-58, 457-58, 494-96; 17 December, at columns 546-47; 18 December, at column 677, and 19 December, at columns 813-14.

Correspondence

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton may expect a reply to his letter of 22 December 1986 to the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) on behalf of a constituent from Hose, near Melton Mowbray, relating to two Iranian refugees in Pakistan; and why a letter which was marked as urgent has not received an earlier reply.

Mr. Waddington: I am writing today to the hon. Member.

Deaths (Bristol)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the appropriate chief constables as to progress with their inquiries into the deaths near Bristol of Mr. Vimal Dajibhai and Mr. Ashad Sharif and the disappearance in Derbyshire of Mr. Avtar Singh-Gida and into any link between the three incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Avon and Somerset police have completed their inquiries into the deaths of Mr. Dajibhai and Mr. Sharif. The coroner recorded an open verdict in the case of Mr. Dajibhai and a verdict of suicide in the case of Mr. Sharif. I understand from the chief constable of Derbyshire that the police investigation into Mr. Singh-Gida's disappearance is continuing. Other than that Mr. Dajibhai and Mr. Sharif were employed in different parts of the Marconi company and that Mr. Dajibhai and Mr. Singh-Gida probably knew each other when at Loughborough university together in 1979, there is at present no evidence of to link the three cases.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

St. Mary's, Stamford Brook

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what information he has as to the price for which St. Mary's, Stamford Brook, Hammersmith, was sold.

Sir Patrick Mayhew (A Church Commissioner): I have been asked to reply. This redundant church was leased by the London diocesan fund to a property company in 1985 for conversion to residential use. The consideration is confidential to the parties to the transaction. The commissioners were not a party to the lease, nor was their consent required.

TRANSPORT

A Roads (Telephones)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to installing emergency roadside phones on A class roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have completed a preliminary review. My conclusion is that grounds for providing emergency telephones on trunk roads are not strong enough to justify their general provision, although the case is stronger for particular locations. We intend to provide such telephones in a limited range of circumstances as and when funds allow. We shall identify suitable sites for installations. A trial of a cellular radio system is also to be undertaken this year.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to install emergency telephones on the A180.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Because of intense local concern for emergency telephones on the A180 trunk road between Barnetby and Grimsby, I have decided to install emergency telephones on this section immediately.

Lorries (Overloading)

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the enforcement of traffic requirements for the maintenance of driving hours and overloading of lorries in the north-west region and elsewhere during the past six months; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total numbers of inspections undertaken and the results.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the six months to September 1986, vehicle examiners carried out 6,555 maintenance inspections in the north-west, resulting in 787 prohibitions. National figures are not yet available for this period, but during the year ending 31 March 1986, 101,075 maintenance inspections were carried out, of which 13,797 resulted in prohibitions.

Traffic examiners carried out 4,158 weight checks on lorries in the north-western traffic area during the six months to September 1986 and found 652 to be overloaded; 70,000 tachograph charts were checked and 10,109 breaches of the regulations found. Over the whole country during this period 33,822 lorries were weighed and 6,426 found to be overloaded; 290,000 tachograph charts were checked.

NATO (Planning Board of European Inland Transport)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make the minutes of the meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's planning board for European inland transport available in the Library.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The minutes of the board are classified confidential.

NATO (Civil Aviation Planning Committee)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make the minutes of the meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's civil aviation planning committee available in the Library.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The minutes of the committee are classified NATO confidential.

Undersea Cable (Douglas-Colwyn Bay)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *731*, regarding the dimensions of the BT

undersea cable running between Douglas and Colwyn Bay, what information he has as to the texture and appearance of the external surface of the cable.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the cable is covered in standard spirally wound jute and then covered in tar; it is dark in colour and its texture remains slightly sticky due to being constantly surrounded by water.

Driving Test

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the numbers of people in the most recent period for which figures are available taking driving tests who have failed such tests on *(a)* one, *(b)* two, *(c)* three, *(d)* four and *(e)* more than four previous occasions; and how many tests on average an individual takes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not available.

Results of a sample survey of driving tests conducted in 1985 showed that 47 per cent. of tests were taken by candidates who had previously failed.

Road Accidents (New Drivers)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to procure information on the number of accidents involving drivers who have passed their test within the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not recorded on the accident report form.

Driving Tests (Accidents)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents are recorded as having occurred during driving tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the last year for which figures are available, 381 accidents during driving tests were recorded. During the same period (October 1983 to September 1984) 1,797,177 tests were conducted. The percentage on which accidents occurred was roughly 0·02 per cent., about 1 in 4,700 tests. Recorded accidents range from minor incidents such as bumper touches to more serious accidents involving personal injury.

Salcombe Estuary

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he issued a licence for the spoil ground in the Salcombe estuary and for what period.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A consent under section 34(1)*(b)* of the Coast Protection Act 1949 was first issued to the local district council to deposit material in the deep channel at Salcombe in 1969. This consent, which is concerned with safety of navigation, has been renewed at regular intervals, the last occasion being in February 1987 for a further period of three years.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, has also separately licensed these deposits under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, the last renewal being on 6 March 1987 for one year.

Residential Areas (Traffic Management)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he plans to issue up-to-date guidance on ways in which traffic and parking in residential areas can be better controlled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We shall be sending all county, borough and district councils in England the first in a new series of traffic leaflets. This will also be sent to a wide range of professional and representative bodies. It will illustrate self-enforcing measures that can help deter through traffic from using residential streets, so as to give greater emphasis to the needs of residents. Further traffic leaflets are planned on this topic. Their main purpose will be to make available, on as wide a basis as possible, information on traffic and parking techniques. The first leaflet includes road humps, footway widening, rumble strips, environmental road closures, width restrictions, wide area crossings and a range of entry treatments. Copies of the leaflet have been placed in the Library of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

CSCE (Vienna)

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made at the conference on security and co-operation in Europe in Vienna; when it is likely to be concluded; what input the British delegation is making; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) gave to my hon. Friends the Members for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) and for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Grist) on 18 March at columns 916 and 550. Participants have agreed to aim to complete negotiations by 31 July this year. Our delegation will continue to make a forceful and constructive contribution.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give a breakdown by nationality of the 74 fishing vessels boarded by fisheries protection personnel in the Falkland Islands conservation zone since 1 February.

Mr. Eggar: A breakdown by nationality of the 74 vessels boarded by Falkland Islands Government fisheries protection personnel in the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone between 1 February and 12 March 1987 is as follows:

	Number
Spain	45
Poland	23
Japan	3
Italy	2
Greece	1

Forged Passports

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 18

March regarding British passports forged by agents of the Israeli Government, if he will state *(a)* on how many occasions this has occurred, *(b)* what action was taken when this was discovered, *(c)* what has happened to the forged passports and *(d)* what assurances he has that no acts of terrorism have been committed by holders of these passports.

Mr. Eggar: We know of previous occasions in 1973 and 1979 when Israelis were found to be using forged British passports. The Israeli Government did not then provide satisfactory assurances that such abuse would not recur. On this occasion, the assurances which we have received do not relate to the previous use of the forged passports, which have been retained by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. George asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of jobs lost in the Darlaston area of Walsall since 1979; what is his estimate of the current level of unemployment there; and how this figure compares with 1979.

Mr. Lee: Information about job losses is not available. My Department's small area statistics monitor only net changes in employment between census of employment dates, and the most recent figures are for September 1981. No census was taken in 1979 and the September 1984 census estimates for local areas are not yet available.

Following is the available information about unemployment which is also in the Library. On 12 February 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the electoral wards of Bentley and Darlaston North and Darlaston South was 2,569. Statistics of unemployment for electoral wards are derived from the ward based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to the total level of unemployment in the European Economic Community at the most recent date for which figures are available, and as to the comparable figures 10 years previously.

Mr. Lee: In January 1987, there were 17·052 million people registered as unemployed in the European Community. This compares with an estimate of 6·642 million for the same countries in January 1977.

Machine Safety

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Paymaster General if he has received recent representations from the British Machine Guarding Authority about safety standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Yes. A letter will be sent to the British Machine Guarding Authority to make the Government's position clear. I will place a copy in the Library.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Hicks asked the Paymaster General if he will state the specific measures that his Department has taken to alleviate the adverse economic and general effects for the Plymouth travel-to-work area resulting from the projected job reductions at Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The local jobcentre manager is in contact with management at the dockyard and anyone facing redundancy will be eligible for the full range of help and assistance available to them through our Action for Jobs programme. This includes job placing services, information about jobs available locally and in other districts; advice on a wide range of employment matters and Manpower Services Commission schemes; and advice on and assistance with training and retraining. Until the new management, Brown and Root, has taken control on 6 April 1987, any estimates of likely redundancies or their timing must be purely speculative.

Bridge CPA Ltd., Dartington

Mr. Steen asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will advise the Manpower Services Commission to consider granting the Bridge Agency at Dartington a new contract covering the South Hams area;

(2) if, in the light of representations he has now received, he will arrange for the Manpower Services Commission to grant a new contract to the Bridge Agency in Dartington;

(3) if he will make a statement on the employment implications of the decision of the Manpower Services Commission not to renew the contract of the Bridge Agency at Dartington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The community programme agency operated in south Deven by Bridge CAP Ltd, which covers the South Hams and Dartington areas, is based at Totnes. The decision has been made by the Manpower Services Commission not to renew the present contract and after 3 April 1987, the management of the agency will be undertaken by Community Rural Aid Ltd, a well established national community programme agent with experience of operating community programme projects in rural areas.

It is anticipated that Community Rural Aid will be able to offer the existing employees the remainder of their period of employment under the programme. The management team based at Totnes will continue to function but under fresh direction from Community Rural Aid, who influence will be mainly directed to the agency's system of operational and financial control.

Industrial Tribunals Board (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many people from ethnic minorities have been recruited on to the Nottingham panel of the Industrial Tribunals Board over the last nine years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: One.

YTS

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to provide a meal allowance for trainees on the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: The weekly training allowance payable to YTS trainees is intended to cover normal living expenses, including meals.

The first-year allowance will be increased to £28·50 per week from April 1987. I have no plans to introduce an additional meal allowance for YTS trainees.

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what is the current real value, based on *(a)* retail prices index and *(b)* average earnings, of the YTS allowance compared with its value in 1978.

Mr. Trippier: The youth opportunities programme allowance in 1978 was £19·50, equivalent to about £39 when adjusted to take account of increases since 1978 in the retail price index, and about £47 if the adjustment is based on increases in average earnings. The YTS allowance for first-year trainees will increase from its present £27·30 to £28·50 on 6 April 1987; second year trainees will continue to receive a training allowance of £35 per week. Allowance levels must reflect the fact that trainees are still learning, and YTS provides substantially upgraded training compared with the youth opportunities programme.

Gay Men and Lesbians

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government in respect of discrimination against gay men and lesbians.

Mr. Lee: The Government have made it clear that we deplore prejudice of any kind in employment and indeed regard it as poor business practice.

Restart

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if, for the most recently available date, and in the table form used in the *Official Report*, column *157* on 29 October, he will show for each Manpower Services Commission region the number of people interviewed under the restart programme; and how many have been placed into a destination.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will list for the most recently available date, and in the table form used in the *Official Report*, column *157* on 29 October *(a)* how many people have been called for interview under the restart programme and *(b)* how many have been counselled and how many have been placed into a destination for (i) each Manpower Services Commission region, (ii) the Greater London area, (iii) the area manpower board areas covering the former Merseyside county council, the former West Midlands county council and (iv) Lancashire.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Figures given in the form used by my hon. Friend in his reply on 29 October 1986 could not be used as an answer to this question. They were only a measure of the extent to which we know of direct placements made as the immediate result of an interview. This is not a measure of the total number of people who find work or training directly or indirectly as a result of the restart programme.

Seventy-four per cent. of participants agree to pursue the offer made to them at their interview, and we do not know the results of all of them. The immediate placings do not include the many people who subsequently find jobs, or other openings, such as training, as a result of counselling, restart courses or the outcome of other elements of the restart menu. I do not therefore believe that figures in the form asked for by the hon. Member could accurately measure the "destination" of those interviewed.

WALES

Wales Advisory Board

1. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to chair a meeting of the Wales Advisory Board for local authority higher education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The committee of the Wales Advisory Board for Local Authority Higher Education, of which I am chairman, next meets on 3 April.

Gresford-Pulford Bypass

16. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimates he makes of the percentage of local labour employed in the construction of the Gresford to Pulford bypass.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Subject to temporary fluctuations as the work progresses, I estimate that about 70 per cent. of the hourly paid work force directly engaged by the main contractor will be recruited locally.

Doctors and Nurses

17. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest available information regarding the numbers of doctors and nurses employed in hospitals in Wales; and how these compare with the numbers so employed in 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: At 30 September 1986, the number of medical staff employed in the hospital service in Wales, measured in whole-time equivalents, was 2,062, compared with 1,786 in September 1979—an increase of 15·4 per cent. The latest figures for nursing staff employed in the hospital service in Wales relate to September 1985; after adjustment for the reduction in working hours in 1980, the whole-time equivalent figure for 1985 is 20,812, compared with 18,035 in September 1979, again an increase of 15·4 per cent.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in Wales that have been, or are due to be, damaged or destroyed through developments which have been given planning permission since 1977, the type of development, the county and district in which they are situated, and the date when permission was given.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Local Government will be writing to the hon. Member with the information for England, Scotland and Wales.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out region by region, district health authority in-patient waiting lists, the total population living in each district, the percentage which the former represents of the latter and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available information relates to 30 September 1986, and is given in the following table:

	Cases on Hospital in-patient waiting lists	*Estimated population mid-1985 (thousands)*	*Number of cases waiting per 1,000 population*
Powys	59	111·4	0·5
Gwynedd	1,982	233·6	8·5
East Dyfed	2,354	226·6	10·4
Clwyd	4,689	397·9	11·8
West Glamorgan	5,011	364·1	13·8
Mid Glamorgan	8,961	533·9	16·8
Gwent	8,321	440·2	18·9
South Glamorgan	7,620	394·8	19·3
Pembrokeshire	2,430	109·3	22·2

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out region by region, the hospital urgent in-patient waiting list in each district, together with the number of urgent cases waiting more than a month, the percentage the latter represents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available information relates to 30 September 1986, and is given in the following table:

Urgent cases on Hospital In-patient Waiting Lists

	Total number	*Number waiting for more than one month*	*Number waiting for more than one month as a percentage of total*
East Dyfed	7	—	—
Powys	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	661	139	21·0
Gwynedd	61	25	41·0
Mid Glamorgan	332	206	62·0
Gwent	949	603	63·5
Clwyd	187	142	75·9
Pembrokeshire	324	250	77·2
South Glamorgan	1,087	852	78·4

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out region by region, the hospital non-urgent in-patient waiting list in each health district together with the number of non-urgent cases waiting more than a year, the percentage the latter represents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available information by district health authority relates to 30 September 1986, and is given in the following table:

Non-urgent cases on hospital in-patient waiting lists

	Total number	*Number waiting for more than one year*	*Number waiting for more than one year as a percentage of total*
Powys	59	1	1·7
Gwynedd	1,921	67	3·5
East Dyfed	2,347	270	11·5
West Glamorgan	4,350	506	11·6
Clwyd	4,502	623	13·8
Gwent	7,372	1,882	25·5
South Glamorgan	6,533	1,788	27·4
Mid Glamorgan	8,629	3,058	35·4
Pembrokeshire	2,106	1,361	64·6

720

Farming Unions (Representations)

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received from farming unions in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received representations from both the farming unions in Wales on a wide range of agricultural issues.

Cambrian Housing Association

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ask the Housing Corporation to investigate the reasons for the Cambrian Housing Association in Swansea failing after 12 months of negotiations to complete sales of houses to its tenants and failing to reply to correspondence from would-be purchasers and their solicitors.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I have asked the Housing Corporation office for Wales to investigate this matter and will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Programme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) on 11 March, *Official Report*, column *186*, what proportion of the total aid programme in each year since 1979 has been represented by conversion of loans into grants under the policy of retrospective terms adjustment.

Mr. Chris Patten: The cost of measures set out in the *Official Report* on 11 March 1987, at column *186*, in respect of the policy of retrospective terms adjustment, as a proportion of gross public expenditure on aid, has been as follows:

	Per cent.
1979	3·4
1980	5·8
1981	5·9
1982	5·0
1983	7·0
1984	6·3
1985	5·9

These figures include exceptional debt relief measures in respect of Bangladesh and Uganda which fall outside retrospective terms adjustment agreements with these countries.

Students (South Africa)

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied that no discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or creed is involved in the selection of South African students to attend British institutions of higher education at public expense.

Mr. Chris Patten: The training in question is specifically for the benefit of non-white South Africans disadvantaged by the apartheid system. A limited number of opportunities for study are provided to specially selected white South Africans through other channels.

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will set out the criteria employed by the Educational Opportunities Council of the United States of America in choosing South African students to attend British institutions of higher education at public expense.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Education Opportunities Council is a non-governmental organisation in South Africa and is not funded by the United States Government. Students are selected on an individual basis and in the light of their educational qualifications.

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the financial basis of the arrangement made between his Department and the Education Opportunities Council of the United States of America.

Mr. Chris Patten: We pay a fee to the Educational Opportunities Council for its administrative services in selecting candidates for the new programme of undergraduate training announced by my noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Baroness Young, in another place on 21 October 1986.

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will state the reasons why his Department was unable to make its own arrangements for the selection of South African students to attend British institutions of higher education at public expense.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department is involved in the selection process through the agency of the British Council representative in Johannesburg; the large number of applications for scholarships has necessitated the involvement also of the Educational Opportunities Council, a non-governmental organisation in South Africa.

Sir Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the students currently selected to attend British institutions of higher education from South Africa at public expense have been sponsored or in any way recommended by the African National Congress.

Mr. Chris Patten: None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the report on the study and assessment of industry capabilities to meet the requirements of civil defence is available for public inspection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Progress has been made with the study, but I am not able to say when it will be complete. The study will remain confidential.

NATO (Committees)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make the minutes of the meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Industrial Planning Committee available in the Library.

Mr. Butcher: No. It would be inappropriate to do so because the minutes of meetings contain security classified information.

Chrome Ore

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the quantity, source, and port of entry of the imports of chrome ore to Great Britain in each year since 1980.

Mr. Alan Clark: Port of entry data for all years and data on source from 1984 are not available. Imports to the United Kingdom of chrome ore, classified to STIC sub-group 287·91, for 1984 and 1985 were 129·8 and 137·7 thousands of metric tonnes respectively. Latest information for 1986 shows imports for January-November of 119·6 thousands of metric tonnes. Information for the years 1980-83 is as follows:

United Kingdom imports of chromium ore and concentrates 1980-83
thousands m/tonnes

Country	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
South Africa	70·6	54·8	53·7	91·9
Mozambique	9·7	6·9	0·0	0·0
Philippines	9·2	4·0	1·5	2·6
Cyprus	2·0	3·8	5·4	1·1
Finland	0·7	5·6	0·6	0·0
Greece	0·0	1·0	2·5	2·1
Other	0·4	0·4	0·8	2·7
Total	92·6	76·5	64·5	100·4

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics. Country of origin (COO): SITC R2 Sub-group 287·9.

EC (Regional Development Fund)

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he hopes to announce a decision regarding the two applications made by the Cornwall county council in January 1986 for financial assistance under article 15 of the European regional development fund main regulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I cannot give a firm date, but I hope that this problem will be resolved soon.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the specific measures that his Department has taken to alleviate the adverse economic and social effects for the Plymouth travel-to-work area resulting from the projected job reductions at Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Lonrho plc

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in relation to the purchase by Lonrho plc of 10 whisky brands from Guinness plc.

Mr. Howard: Representations have been received and the inspectors appointed to investigate the affair and membership of Guinness plc are aware of them. It would not be in the public interest for me to give further details.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received in relation to a possible breach of section 231 of the Companies Act 1985 by Lonrho plc in relation to its Liechtenstein subsidiaries Blorg and Contango.

Mr. Howard: Representations have been received and are under consideration. It would not be in the public interest for me to give further details.

Insider Dealing

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with the authorities on the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man about developing an agreed policy to limit insider dealing.

Mr. Howard: There have been some informal discussions at official level. I would hope, in due course, to arrive at arrangements along the lines envisaged by the hon. Member.

Council of Industry Ministers

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the outcome of the Council of Industry Ministers meeting on 19 March.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Ministers discussed proposals from the European steel producers association Eurofer for reducing excess European steel capacity. The Council agreed that substantial excess capacity still exists, and the Commission will now have discussions with Eurofer and the producers designed to achieve further closures, and aimed primarily at lossmaking firms. I made it clear that the United Kingdom has already made a major contribution to the restructuring of the European steel industry, and that the United Kingdom steel industry was now in profit. As no BSC volume was contained in the Eurofer proposals, nothing under discussion at the Council will affect the three-year BSC strategy agreed in August 1985, or will prejudice decisions on BSC strategy after 1988.

Ministers also discussed the steel production quota system. The Commission will make new proposals concerning 1988 in time for discussion at the next meeting of the Industry Council.

The Council also agreed a two-year extension to the SPRINT programme whose main aim is to help improve the competitivness, particularly of small and medium-sized firms, by setting up means to assist the exchange of technology and innovation practice.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Butter Surplus (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the report of the Court of Auditors regarding the legality of the decision of the Agriculture Council on the financing of the disposal of butter surpluses; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Court of Auditors

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will propose at the next meeting of the European Council that representatives of the Court of Auditors should be present at all future meetings of the Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The president of the court already addresses the ECOFIN Council each year, and court representatives attend meetings of appropriate Council committees.

Information Services

Dr. Owen asked the Prime Minister if she will list the expenditure in 1987 on a weekly basis of all Government information services itemised by Department and function; and what were the comparable figures for each of the two previous years.

The Prime Minister: The information is not recorded centrally. I refer the right hon. Member to my answer on 19 November 1986 at column *190* to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) for the costs of the press office at 10 Downing street.

Public Bodies (Women)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister how many women she has appointed to public bodies since 1979; and what percentage this represents of total appointments.

The Prime Minister: I have appointed or re-appointed 45 women to public bodies since 1979. This represents 14·0 per cent. of such appointments since that date for which I have been responsible.

ENERGY

Electricity Supply

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has available as to the number of occupied dwellings not connected to the public electricity supply according to local authority areas or other geographical areas.

Mr. Goodlad: I regret that no such information is available.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether ambulance staff have participated in the exercise at the local emergency plan at Chapelcross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfyndd, Oldbury, Berkeley, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell and Sizewell; and, in each case where units were involved, if he will list which ones participated;

(2) if he will list for each of the following power stations what studies have been made of the problems of evacuating all low mobility groups in the event of a worst case atomic accident at Chapelcross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfyndd, Oldbury, Berkely, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool; and if he will also list for each study the geographical area covered;

(3) what specialist equipment, including personal dosimeters, radiac survey meters and decontamination meters are available for ambulance staff at Chapelcross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfyndd, Oldbury, Berkely, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradford and Sizewell, respectively; and in each case what training staff have received;

(4) what training has been given to ambulance staff to deal with a major accident at each of the following nuclear installations: Chapelcross, Sellafield, Wylfa, Trawsfyndd, Oldbury, Berkely, Hinkley Point, Winfrith, Dungeness, Bradwell, Sizewell and Hartlepool.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987, c. *318-19*]: The Central Electricity Generating Board has now amended advice which it earlier gave me. CEGB medical centres, although often colloquially known as ambulance centres, in fact rely on National Health Service ambulances. My reply of 12 February is otherwise unaffected.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy when public safety siting criteria for nuclear installations were last changed or updated; what information on such safety criteria has been published by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987, c. *317-18*]: The last decision to change public safety siting criteria was that announced by the then Minister of Power on 6 February 1968, at column 235 of the *Official Report*. Information on siting criteria has been published by the Health and Safety Executive in its booklet "The Work of HM Nuclear Installations Inspectorate", a copy of which is in the Library of the House, and in the documents referred to therein.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy what statistical demographic criteria, for each type of nuclear reactor, are used in Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate's assessment of the safety of sites for nuclear power stations; if he will publish a list showing for each existing nuclear power station *(a)* the relevant limiting criteria compared with *(b)* the actual population figures in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1987, c. 317-18]: The main criteria used by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate cover the population at particular distances from a site, viz:

Distance km	*Guideline population*	
	MAGNOX	*AGR*
0 to 2	1,400	9,000
2 to 3	4,600	35,000
3 to 5	16,000	113,000
5 to 8	45,000	325,000

There are related criteria which guide the NII about the maximum population to permit any 30-deg sector of the area round a site. Populations for existing sites, taken from the 1981 census are:

	Distance (km)			
	0 to 2	*2 to 3*	*3 to 5*	*5 to 8*
Berkeley	320	2,000	7,900	8,300
Bradwell	460	190	7,200	3,900
Calder Hall	140	2,100	2,300	8,100
Chapelcross	250	410	11,000	3,100
Dungeness	60	140	590	6,000
Hinkley Point	120	300	1,200	2,800
Hunterston	50	100	6,400	1,400
Oldbury	250	260	1,800	30,000
Sizewell	140	3,200	3,600	4,200
Trawsfynydd	320	290	1,500	5,400
Wylfa	460	730	1,100	1,600

The NII does not necessarily insist on rigid adherence to these criteria but, in addition, takes account of various unquantifiable factors.

Once a site has been accepted for a nuclear station, arrangements are made to ensure that residential and industrial developments are so controlled that the general characteristics of the site are preserved, and that local authorities consult with the inspectorate with regard to any proposed new development which falls outside the guidelines.

Coal Liquefaction

Mr. Raffan asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the Government have yet been able to attract private investment for the Point of Ayr coal-to-oil liquefaction project.

Mr. Peter Walker [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 February, c. *364*]: I am pleased to announce that the Department of Energy will now be making available support of about £2·5 million for British Coal's liquefaction project at Point of Ayr, Clwyd, North Wales. This will cover the period of construction, commissioning and operation, and follows the signing by British Coal of an agreement with Ruhrkohle Oil and Gas, a subsidiary of the largest German coal-producing group, Ruhrkohle, bringing it into the project on a non-exclusive basis. Departmental support for this stage of the project had been conditional on British Coal's securing acceptable private sector participation.

This important project is at an advanced stage of construction and should be commissioned early next year. The construction phase to date has been funded by British Coal with support from the European Commission. I trust that the new agreement marks the beginning of increasing industrial interest in this process.

SCOTLAND

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in Scotland that have been, or are due to be, damaged or destroyed through developments which have been given planning permission since 1977, the type of development, the regions and districts in which they are situated, and the dates when permission was given.

Mr. Ancram: As the hon. Member is seeking similar information for England and Wales, the Nature Conservancy Council is compiling this in respect of Great Britain as a whole, My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be writing to the hon. Member with this information as soon as it is available.

In-Patient Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out region by region, health board in-patient waiting lists, the total population living in each district, the percentage which the former represents of the latter and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

	Waiting List as at 30 September 1986[1]	Estimated population as at 30 June 1985	Waiting List as percentage of population[2]	Ranking
Argyll and Clyde	6,528	446,637	1·46	8
Ayrshire and Arran	4,862	375,212	1·30	7
Borders	301	101,705	0·30	3
Dumfries and Galloway	3,205	146,562	2·19	15
Fife	5,468	344,019	1·59	11
Forth Valley	2,558	272,426	0·94	5
Grampian	9,969	500,566	1·99	14
Greater Glasgow	17,866	968,801	1·84	12
Highland	3,040	198,617	1·53	9
Lanarkshire	6,249	568,077	1·10	6
Lothian	14,341	745,229	1·92	13
Orkney	50	19,351	0·26	2
Shetland	142	23,440	0·61	4
Tayside	6,215	394,322	1·58	10
Western Isles	68	31,545	0·22	1
Scotland	80,862	5,136,509	1·57	—

[1] Provisional.
[2] The numbers on the waiting list for a particular health board may include numbers of people not resident in that health board area.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will set out region by region, the hospital urgent in-patient waiting list in each district, together with the number of urgent cases waiting more than a month, the percentage the latter represents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage;

(2) if he will set out region by region, the hospital non-urgent in-patient waiting list in each health district together with the number of non-urgent cases waiting more than a year, the percentage the latter represents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the hospital in-patient waiting lists for each health board at the end of September 1986.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1987, c. *580*]: The information requested, which relates to 30 September 1986 and is provisional, follows:

	Number
Argyll and Clyde	6,528
Aryshire and Arran	4,862
Borders	301
Dumfries and Galloway	3,205
Fife	5,468
Forth Valley	2,558
Grampian	9,969
Greater Glasgow	17,866
Highland	3,040
Lanarkshire	6,249
Lothian	14,341
Orkney	50
Shetland	142
Tayside	6,215
Western Isles	68
Scotland	80,862

Scottish Development Agency (Public Relations)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual budget of the public relations department of the Scottish Development Agency; and how many people it employs.

Mr. Lang: The budget for the current financial year is £660,000 and the department employs nine staff.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why the Scottish Development Agency put out to private public relations consultants the arranging of the ceremony of the declaration of continuing commitment to the east end of Glasgow; and what was the total cost of this event.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

GEAR Project

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the full cost of the evaluation study of the GEAR project as commissioned by the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Ancram: This study is not yet completed, but is expected to cost about £125,000.

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take in the light of the findings of the Scottish Development Agency evaluation study of the GEAR project regarding the adequacy of the resources made available to the project; if he will now make additional resources available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Although the consultants commissioned by the Scottish Development Agency gave an oral account today of the evaluation work at the final meeting of the GEAR governing committee, their report is not yet completed. Their findings will have to be considered in due course by all the partners involved in GEAR. Throughout the 10 years of GEAR, it has been made clear that each partner is responsible for the level of its programmes in the area, in the light of the resources available to it overall.

Electricity and Gas Disconnections

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the numbers of domestic consumers disconnected from *(a)* their electricity and *(b)* their gas supply in (i) the quarter and (ii) the 12 months to December 1986 in each electricity and each gas region in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The information requested on electricity disconnections is not held centrally but I am asking the

chairmen of the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board to write to the hon. Member.

Information in respect of gas consumers is a matter for British Gas plc. I am asking the chairman to respond to the hon. Member's request.

Ross Memorial and Nicholson MacKenzie Hospitals

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to be in a position to respond to the request from the Highland health board for the proposed change of use of the Ross memorial hospital, Dingwall, and the proposed closure of the Nicholson MacKenzie hospital, Strathpeffer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a formal submission from the Highland health board seeking approval for its proposals. A decision will be made once the submission has been fully considered.

Health Service Premises, Ross-shire

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps were taken to ensure that the correct procedures for public consultation were carried out over the Highland health board's proposed closure and change of use of health service premises in Ross-shire as outlined to him in its letter of 4 December 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Health boards are required to carry out extensive consultation before submitting any proposal for closure or significant change of use to the Secretary of State. It is for each board to determine the range of consultation necessary in any particular case but, as a normal rule, boards are expected to invite comments from the relevant local health councils, area professional committees, regional, district or islands councils, trade unions and staff associations.

The submission at present under consideration shows that consultations have taken place with all of these organisations, as well as general medical practitioners in Tain and Beauly and members of the public who had registered opposition to the proposals. Copies of the consultation correspondence have been lodged with the Secretary of State as part of the board's submission.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact which his recently announced 5·7 per cent. increase in revenue spending allocations for 1987-88 will have for the Highland health board, particularly with respect to *(a)* the additional overheads associated with Raigmore hospital, Inverness and *(b)* the proposal from the Highland health board of 6 December 1986 for the closure and change of use of health service premises in Ross-shire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Highland health board's revenue allocation for 1987-88 amounts to an increase of 6·84 per cent. over their allocation for 1986-87, well in excess of the average increase of 5·7 per cent. to Scottish health boards. Once increases in pay and prices have been met, it is estimated that the board will be able to devote 2·14 per cent. or £1·15 million to the growth and development of services in its area. This compares with an average growth of 1 per cent. for Scotland. In addition the board have been asked to identify savings equivalent to 1·5 per cent. of their net revenue allocation from greater efficiency and to direct these into patient care. The board's allocation is expected to be more than sufficient to meet any new commitments associated with Raigmore hospital, Inverness. If the board's proposals for the closure and change of use of health service premises in Ross-shire are accepted and implemented the resultant savings will not accrue to the board until 1988-89.

Scottish Development Agency (Consultancy Work)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of work put out to consultants by the Scottish Development Agency for each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the then Minister for Industry and Education to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) on 28 April 1986 at column 298. That answer covered the last six full financial years for which information is currently available.

Criminal Statistics

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for Scotland and each police force area in Scotland the total number in 1986 of *(a)* all crimes, *(b)* crimes of violence against the person, *(c)* burglaries, *(d)* thefts and offences of handling stolen goods, *(e)* offences of fraud and forgery and *(f)* offences of criminal damage.

Mr. Lang: This information is not yet available. The 1986 recorded crime figures for Scotland are currently being compiled and will be published shortly.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to lay before Parliament the statutory orders designating the Breadalbane and Loch Lomond environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *653*]: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to be able to lay the necessary designating order shortly.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what sites he will consider for designation as environmentally sensitive areas in 1988 in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *653*]: In selecting any further sites for designation as environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland, my right hon. and learned Friend will, in the first instance, consider carefully the list of areas already suggested by the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission for Scotland.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Welsh Plant Breeding Station

26. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current level of employment at the Welsh plant breeding station, Gogerddan.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the number of staff employed at the Welsh plant breeding station on 1 April 1986 was 211 and is expected to be 191 on 1 April 1987.

Hertfordshire

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any recent representations regarding the current and future provision of education in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Dunn: Yes. A number of representations have been received on possible reorganisation of secondary school provision in Hertfordshire. Correspondents have been advised of their rights to lodge objections should statutory proposals be made under the provisions of the Education Act 1980.

Natural Environment Research Council

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the total number of staff employed by the Natural Environment Research Council annually since 1979; and if he will give the projection for the next two years.

Mr. Walden: The total numbers of staff employed by the Natural Environment Research Council since 1979 (excluding those directly employed by grant-aided associations) were:

31 December	*Number*
1979	2,908
1980	3,034
1981	2,979
1982	2,915
1983	2,828
1984	2,835
1985	2,571
1986	2,481

The total numbers now forecast on the basis of the council's scientific strategy are expected to decline by about 100 a year over the next few years.

YTS (Meals)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will allocate funds to local education authorities for the provision of free or subsidised meals to those students attending local education authority schools or colleges as part of a YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are no plans to allocate funds in this way.

School Closures

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many school closures his Department has approved since 1979; and what information he has on the subsequent use of the school buildings and land.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Since 1979, the closures of 1,576 schools have been either approved by me or my predecessors or determined by local education authorities, under section 12(7) of the Education Act 1980. Authorities and voluntary bodies are entitled to make use of or dispose of redundant school sites and premises as they wish without informing the Department.

GCSE

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions his Department has had with the Secondary Examinations Council about its decision to withhold its approval for inclusion in the general certificate of secondary education of the syllabus entitled "English as a Second Language"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is aware of the Secondary Examinations Council's decision, which will not affect pupils already embarked on syllabuses. I understand that the chairman of the council has written explaining the council's reason, and my right hon. Friend will respond when he receives that letter. However, in his view all pupils awarded a GCSE certificate in English need to have aspired to the same standards, and the introduction of a special version of English would be detrimental to the interests of those pupils seeking the qualification and to the responsibilities of schools to ensure that all pupils achieve a good standard in English.

Teachers (Special Qualifications)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department on the numbers of teachers in each local education authority with special qualifications relevant to the teaching of pupils with statements under the Education Act 1981, other than teachers employed full-time in special schools; if he will publish what information is available for the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

"Preparation for Parenthood in the Secondary School Curriculum"

Mr. Grylls asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he received the report of the inquiry carried out into "Preparation for Parenthood in the Secondary School Curriculum" conducted for his Department by the University of Aston; what was the total cost to the Government of that inquiry; what were its recommendations; which of those recommendations have so far been implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In September 1983 the Department received the report of this commissioned research project, which was funded by grant totalling £128,778 over the period 1979-83. The report included a number of wide-ranging recommendations aimed at improving

parenthood education in secondary schools; most of these were addressed to local education authorities, schools and teacher training institutions. So far as the Department is concerned, account has been taken where appropriate of the recommendations in Her Majesty's inspectorate's discussion document on "Health Education from 5 to 16". The Education (No. 2) Act 1986 now requires that any sex education given in schools shall encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life. The Act will also transfer control over the content and organisation of sex education to the new school governing bodies with greater parental and local community representation; and governing bodies will have an increased say over other parts of the school curriculum.

Loughborough University (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton may expect a reply to the letter which he wrote to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Buckingham, (Mr. Walden), on 21 October 1986 regarding Loughborough university, with a further letter on 30 January 1987 and a telephone call to his private office recently; and if he will instruct his Department to deal more expeditiously with correspondence from hon. Members.

Mr. Walden: I replied to my hon. Friend on 20 March. I apologise unreservedly for the delay in writing to him. The Department has introduced a new system for handling correspondence from hon. Members. We fully expect this to lead to fewer delays in replying.

Playground Supervision

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to impose a statutory requirement on education authorities in England and Wales to provide playground supervision in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

CIVIL SERVICE

Appointments

Mr. Williams asked the Minister for Civil Service in what circumstances regulation 11 of the Civil Service Commission General Regulations 1986 permits the requirement for open competition to be waived in making an appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service Commissioners have discretion to waive open competition in the circumstances specified in regulation 11 of the Civil Service General Regulations. These can be summarised as follows:

(a) where the commissioners are satisfied that this is for special and exceptional means justified by the needs of the public service and the proved merits of the candidate;

(b) to enable staff to be transferred into the Civil Service with their work following a machinery of government change;

(c) to enable staff to be transferred from elsewhere in the public service to the Civil Service;

(d) to offer appointments in shortage grades to candidates who have demonstrated their suitability in competing for equivalent or high level appointments for which they have been narrowly unsuccessful;

(e) to facilitate inward secondments to the Civil Service; and

(f) to enable former civil servants to be reinstated in their former grade or re-employed in a lower grade.

The commissioners use these discretionary powers sparingly. Each appointment under *(a)* is recorded in the commissioners' annual report; there are typically one or two such cases a year. Appointments under *(b)*-*(d)* are made infrequently. Under *(e)* 52 inward secondments were approved from 1 May 1986 to 31 December 1986. There are approximately 400 cases a year under *(f)*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Watts asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was paid in income tax by the top 5 per cent. of income earners in 1978-79 and in the most recent year for which figures are available; and whether he has any estimate of the total incomes of this group of taxpayers in each of those years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1978-79 the total gross income of the top 5 per cent. of income tax payers (about 1·08 million married couples and single people) was about £15 billion and their tax liability was about £4·85 billion. The latest estimates for 1986-87 are that the top 5 per cent. of income tax payers comprise 1·03 million married couples and single people who have gross income of £38 billion and tax liabilities of about £11·2 billion.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table giving the range and size of income tax cuts since 1979 in the same form as the answer to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on 4 April 1985, *Official Report*, columns *705-6*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The table shows estimates of reductions in income tax liabilities at 1987-88 income levels of the proposed allowances, thresholds and rates for 1987-88 compared with an indexed 1978-79 regime. For the comparison, the 1978-79 allowances and thresholds have been indexed in line with the increase in the RPI between December 1977 and December 1986. As child tax allowances were being phased out in 1978-79 they have been excluded from the comparison.

Range of total income in 1987-88[1]	*Number of units paying tax in 1987-88*	*Reductions in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime*	
		Amount	*Average per tax unit*
£	*(million)*	£ million	£
Under 5,000	3·20	350	[2]85
5,000-10,000	7·60	1,950	[2]250
10,000-15,000	5·30	2,550	480
15,000-20,000	2·70	1,950	710
20,000-30,000	1·60	2,000	1,240
30,000-50,000	0·60	1,450	2,380
Over 50,000	0·15	1,750	11,600
TOTAL	21·2	12,000	540

[1] All information is in terms of tax units — that is, married couples ae counted as one and their incomes combined.

[2] By reference to the estimated numbers who would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime; this number is some 900,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1987-88, some 800,000 in the income range below £5,000 and 100,000 in the range £5,000 to £10,000.

Personal Allowances

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures showing *(a)* the gross cost in 1987-88 of replacing all existing personal income tax allowances with tax-free, non-means-tested tax credits or basic incomes of £10 a week for each person aged 16 or over, *(b)* the additional costs of allowing each individual, counting husbands and wives separately, fixed amount tax discounts as follows: (i) £3 a week, £6 per week and £7·50 a week on earned income and (ii) £3, £6, £7·50, £21 and £30 per week on investment income including occupational pensions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Assuming indexation of personal allowances, it is estimated that replacing all existing personal allowances with tax-free non-means-tested basic incomes of £10 per week for each person aged 16 or over would lead to a yield to the Exchequer of about £7 billion in a full year at 1987-88 income levels. The offsetting costs from allowing tax discounts on earned and unearned incomes for each individual are estimated to be as follows:

Weekly tax discount on earned income (£)	*Cost in a full year at 1987-88 income levels* (£ billion)
3·00	4
6·00	8
7·50	10

Weekly tax discount on investment income[1] (£)	*Cost in a full year at 1987-88 income levels* (£ billion)
3·00	3
6·00	5
7·50	6
21·00	10
30·00	12

[1] Assuming that occupational pensions and the state retirement pension are treated as investment income.

Company Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1957, 1964, 1973, 1979 and each of the past three years his estimate of the amount of mainstream corporation tax paid by companies as a percentage of their total income; and if he will provide a similar percentage for the amount of tax paid or payable at the standard rate by the company or the recipient on the amount distributed by way of interest and dividends.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The present imputation system of corporation tax was introduced with effect from April 1973; a consistent series for mainstream corporation tax is therefore available only after 1973. The required figures, excluding public corporations, are:

Financial year	*Mainstream Corporation Tax*		*Tax on dividends and annual payments*[1]	
	Amount £ billion	*Percentage of income*[2] *Per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Percentage of income*[2] *Per cent.*
1979	2·8	7·1	2·1	5·3
1983	3·8	7·0	2·4	4·4
1984	5·0	7·5	3·4	5·1
1985	6·7	9·0	4·3	5·7

[1] Advance corporation tax on dividends and tax on companies annual payments.

[2] Total company income in the calendar year as defined in the national accounts, net of interest payments.

Estimates of 1986 company incomes will be available later this year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a forecast of gross income for tax purposes in the current financial year of (i) financial companies and institutions, (ii) companies engaged in the extradition of oil and gas and (iii) other industrial and commercial companies; and if he will include figures for each category of tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this information is not yet available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of mainsteam corporation tax collected on the profits of industrial and commercial companies, excluding the extraction of oil and gas, as a percentage of its gross income for tax purposes in 1957, 1967, 1977 and in each of the past three years, together with the amount of taxes collected or payable; and if he will provide similar figures for tax on the amount distributed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The present imputation system of corporation tax was introduced with effect from April 1973; a consistent series for mainstream corporation tax is therefore available only after 1973. I regret that it is not possible to identify the contribution of extraction of oil and gas to total company income and to dividend payments. The required figures for all industrial and commercial companies, excluding public corporations, are:

Financial year	*Mainstream Corporation Tax*		*Advance Corporation Tax on dividends*	
	Amount £ billion	*Percentage of income*[1] *Per cent.*	*Amount £ billion*	*Percentage of income*[1] *Per cent.*
1977	1·7	7·4	1·0	4·6
1983	3·3	7·0	1·7	3·6
1984	4·4	7·4	2·7	4·6
1985	5·7	8·9	3·3	5·1

[1] Total company income in the calendar year as defined in the national accounts, net of interest payments.

Estimates of 1986 incomes of industrial and commercial companies will be available shortly.

Dividends (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the yield in the current financial year of the standard rate of tax on dividends not subject to the relief in the hands of the recipient.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Advance corporation tax receipts for the current financial year are estimated at £4·4 billion. I regret that a reliable estimate of repayments of the associated tax credit is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on how much British banks have disbursed in loans to Latin America in each of the past three years.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Data on gross disbursements by British banks to individual countries are not routinely collected. The available statistics for United Kingdom-registered banks showing their consolidated claims on individual countries are published in the Bank of England *Quarterly Bulletin*, table 15, copies of which can be found in the House of Commons Library.

Privatisation

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* up-to-date figures for fees paid in respect of all privatisation issues since 1979 on a comparable basis to the figures supplied to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 24 May, *Official Report*, columns *560-64*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 24 May 1985, at columns *560-64*, and to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) on 12 June 1985, at column *447*. Except for the British Telecom and British Aerospace (1985) sales the figures given in these earlier replies, for total fees and commissions paid in the categories specified, are unchanged. Updated figures for those sales and the figures for subsequent sales are given below:

Share sale	*Fees and Commissions (£000 including VAT)*
British Telecom	97,650
British Aerospace 1985	9,381
Britoil 1985	8,100
Cable and Wireless 1985	10,313
British Gas	[1]80,314
British Airways	[1]12,803

[1] Estimates: final accounts not yet available.

Personal Incomes

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons, compiled in terms of tax units and after contributions to occupational pension schemes have been deducted, have a gross earned income of *(a)* £80,000 per annum and *(b)* £100,000 or more per annum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1984-85, the latest year for which information is available from the survey of personal incomes, it is estimated that 17,000 single people and married couples had gross earned incomes (after contributions to occupational pension schemes) of £80,000 or more, of whom 9,000 had incomes of £100,000 or more.

Mr. Forman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* data from the most recent survey of personal incomes on *(a)* total income, *(b)* total deductions, *(c)* total income tax, *(d)* total tax units and *(e)* total tax units paying tax for each country in the United Kingdom and each standard region in England.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1987]: I regret that incorrect estimates for total deductions were contained in the table shown in my reply. The corrected information is included in the revised table.

	Total income £ million	*Total deductions*[1] £ million	*Total income tax*[2] £ million	*Number of tax units* Thousands	*Number of taxpaying units* Thousands
United Kingdom	191,000	2,790	37,300	21,900	20,500
England	163,000	2,470	32,100	18,600	17,400
Wales	7,650	103	1,380	961	875
Scotland	16,600	177	3,130	1,900	1,770
Northern Ireland	3,790	47	702	467	439
North	9,130	97	1,620	1,170	1,060
Yorkshire and Humberside	14,500	164	2,640	1,750	1,620
North West	19,700	258	3,650	2,380	2,200
East Midlands	12,400	137	2,280	1,440	1,340
West Midlands	15,600	147	2,860	1,960	1,820
East Anglia	5,940	107	1,130	698	671
South East	68,300	1,300	14,560	7,050	6,710
South West	14,600	233	2,700	1,780	1,660

[1] Deductions do not include relief on mortgage interest given at source.
[2] Income tax liabilities have been calculated without deduction for reliefs given at source at basic rate, but after allowance for relief due in excess of basic rate.

Family Taxation

Mr. Gryffi asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present income tax bill of a married man with average earnings with two children.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A married man on average earnings in 1986-87 pays income tax of £41·50 per week. His income tax bill would be unaffected by having two children, but child benefit would be payable at current rates of £14.20 per week.

Overseas Remittances

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the gross amount of rent, interest dividends,

royalties, profits and so on remitted from the United Kingdom to private and other persons not normally resident in the United Kingdom in the coming financial year by category of income showing the amount likely to evade tax, the amount exempt from tax and the amount of tax collected.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this information is not available.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his forecast for the revenue from stamp duty in the next financial year on (i) stocks and shares and (ii) dwellings, together with his estimate for the outturn this year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information is as follows:

	£ million	
	Estimated Outturn 1986-87	*Forecast 1987-88*
Stamp Duty on:		
stocks and shares (including Stamp Duty Reserve Tax)	840	890
residential property	570	700

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the amount of stamp duty payable on share transactions *(a)* since deregulation in the stock markets and *(b)* in a comparable period the previous year; and what is the implied rate at which the share capital of the listed companies is being turned over annually.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Premium Bonds

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what methods are used to publicise the premium bond numbers of unclaimed prizes.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Details of all prizes unclaimed for 18 months or longer are included in the January, April, July and October supplements to the London *Gazette*. Copies of the supplement are available for inspection at larger post offices.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the number of cases in which tax relief will be given through MIRAS or otherwise on mortgage interest payments in the next financial year, together with *(a)* the estimated cost to the Exchequer and *(b)* the number of recipients of working age and their distribution by personal category gross and by range of gross income together with the average amount of relief given;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate of the number of cases in which higher rate tax relief will be given on mortgage interest payments in the current and in the next financial year, together with *(a)* the gross amount of interest qualifying for relief, *(b)* the amount of higher rate relief payable and *(c)* the number of recipients of working age and their distribution by personal category and by range of gross income, together with the average amount of relief given at the standard and higher rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Wife's Earned Income Allowance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the numbers and estimated cost of the wife's earned income allowance in the next financial year by range of the wife's income and of the joint incomes of husband and wife.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Married Women (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by personal category and range of income for elderly and for other taxpayers the gross and net cost to the Exchequer of separate taxation, without aggregation, of married women in the coming financial year on the assumption that each spouse has a transferable allowance equal to the single allowance and that the wife's earned income allowance will be abolished; and how much of the loss would be in respect of higher rate tax on earned income and of standard rate and higher rate tax, respectively, on unearned income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated loss of *(a)* income tax *(b)* higher rate tax and *(c)* capital gains tax in the next financial year on, respectively, life assurance premiums, retirement annuity premiums and lump sum payments to pensioners, distinguishing between non-contributory schemes which provide a maximum pension of 50 per cent. of eligible earnings and other schemes and the investment income of occupational pension schemes, distinguishing between employees and the self-employed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and the hon. Member for Stockton (Mr. Wrigglesworth) of 28 April 1986, *Official Report*, column *329*, to cover 1987-88 as well as 1985-86 and 1986-87, in comparison to 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Married Couples (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing in the case of the wife's earnings election

the estimated cost to the Exchequer in the next financial year, together with tables showing *(a)* the estimated loss of tax in terms of each combined gross income band and *(b)* for (i) husbands and (ii) wives, the numbers assessed separately by range of income together with the gross amount of income and the gross amount of unearned income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Unearned Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing by personal category and range of income the number of women with gross unearned income of £1,000 a year or more, and those with less, together with the average amount of unearned income in each category.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Ice-Cream

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will seek to eliminate value added tax from ice-cream that actually contains milk products.

Mr. Brooke: No.

National Economic Development

Mr. Strang asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the National Economic Development Council following the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Budget will be discussed at the next meeting of the National Economic Development Council on Wednesday 1 April.

MV Silver Sea

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 13 March, *Official Report*, columns *319-20*, about MV Silver Sea, on what date Her Majesty's Customs and Excise began their inquiries; when he expects the inquiries to be completed; and whether he will place a copy of any report on the conclusion of the inquiries in the Library.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Income (Rates and Taxation)

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the proportion in percentage terms, *(b)* the amount in current prices and *(c)* the amount in constant 1985-86 prices of personal income taken by taxation and rates for the year 1986-87, taking account of any changes announced in his Budget statement and any previously announced changes, and for each of the years 1978-79, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 for each level of average earnings, each category of taxpayer, and each category of taxation and rates, in the manner of the answers of 3 April 1985, *Official Report*, column 676, 2 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 112 and of 26 March 1986, *Official Report*, column *530*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Self-Employment (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1957, 1961, 1971, 1981 and the latest year for which figures are available, the number of tax units taxed as self-employed compared to the number classified in the employment statistics and population censuses as self-employed, the amount of income assessed to tax, and the amount of income and the amount of tax paid per head in terms of 1980 prices; and if he will provide an estimate for the current financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1987, c. *536*]: The number of tax units (married couples counted as one unit) and the corresponding number of individuals with any income (or losses) assessable to income tax under case I or II of schedule D (that is, self-employment income) is shown below for 1981-82 and 1984-85 (the latest year for which information is available). Comparable information for 1957, 1961, 1971 and the current financial year is not available.

Also shown are the Department of Employment's estimates of numbers classified as self-employed at June each year, based in the 1981 census of population updated by the annual labour force survey. Those included are confined to people with their main job as self-employed.

Year	*Numbers with any income assessable to case I or II of Sch. D (thousands)*		*Numbers with main job as self employed, at June (thousands)*
	Tax Units	*Individuals*	*Individuals*
1981-82	2,175	2,416	2,118
1984-85	2,478	2,755	2,496

For the tax units with any income assessable to case I or II of schedule D, their total income (including other earned income and investment income) and, at 1980 prices, total income per tax unit and tax per tax unit was as follows:

Tax units with income assessable to case I or II of schedule D

Year	*Total income*	*Total income per tax unit at 1980 prices*	*Tax per tax unit at 1980 prices*
	£ billion	*(£)*	*(£)*
1981-82	18·5	7,420	1,650
1984-85	26·0	7,750	[1]1,640

[1] Excluding mortgage interest relief at source.

Property Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1958, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1979 and 1985 the gross overseas income for tax purposes of the companies and financial institutions as defined on page 168 of the annual supplement to *Economic Trends* 1987, the amount set off against tax of other countries under double taxation relief, and the amount of tax collected;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the greater detail than table 1.10 in the edition of

the United Kingdom "National Accounts" 1986, for the years 1975, 1979 and 1985 the property income from abroad net of foreign taxes and the property income paid abroad less United Kingdom taxes for each sector, including financial institutions, together with the totals of United Kingdom tax and foreign tax payable and the amount of double taxation relief on income from abroad.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his replies*, 18 March 1987, c. *537*]: The closest estimate, available for a run of years, of gross overseas income for tax purposes of companies and financial institutions is provided by the series "Property income from abroad net of foreign taxes" in table 1.10 of United Kingdom "National Accounts" (1986 Edition). Figures are as follows:

£ million

Year	*Number*
1958	682
1964	900
1969	1,374
1974	6,209
1975	6,563
1979	17,523
1985	52,639

More detailed information on property income from abroad net of foreign taxes and property income paid abroad less United Kingdom taxes is published in Section 5 of "United Kingdom Balance of Payments", 1986 Edition. "Property income from abroad net of foreign taxes" in the national accounts is identical to "Earnings on external assets of the United Kingdom" in the balance of payments; "Property income paid abroad net of UK taxes" is identical to "Earnings on UK liabilities to overseas residents". A limited analysis by sector is available.

The double taxation relief allowed to United Kingdom residents in respect of foreign taxes paid on income or capital gains from foreign sources in 1974, 1975, 1979 and 1983 amounted to £2,500 million, £2,200 million, £1,390 million and £2,100 million respectively. Information is not available for years later than 1983 or before 1974. The relief given for 1979 and 1983 is estimated to be in respect of foreign taxes paid of approximately £1,800 million and £3,500 million respectively. No figure is available for 1974, 1975 or for 1985. Estimates of United Kingdom taxes on property income paid abroad are published in table 1.10 of United Kingdom "National Accounts," 1986 Edition. No sectoral breakdown is available.

Income from abroad is not taxed separately in the United Kingdom but is considered together with other forms of income, deductions, reliefs and allowances in computing a company's profits chargeable to corporation tax. Hence, the amount of tax charged or collected on income from overseas is not known.

Shareholders

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, region by region, including Scotland and Wales, the numbers and proportions of shareholders identified in his survey; and if he will list shareholders by income groups.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *647*]: I have placed a copy of the survey report in the Library of the House; the information requested is to be found in tables 30 and 31.

Russell David Construction Ltd.

Mr. Ashton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will investigate the loss of the 714C tax exemption certificate awarded to Russell David Construction Ltd., of Crabtree park, Worksop, by the Retford tax office which was sent but lost in the post; and if he will issue another certificate forthwith.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1987, c. *592*]: The Inland Revenue is pursuing with the Post Office the loss of a document sent by registered post. Meanwhile, a replacement certificate has been authorised and should be in the hands of the company shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Conservation

25. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he proposes to introduce to improve the conservation of energy within present and projected buildings within his responsibility.

Mr. Chope: Many energy conservation measures have been introduced either as specific schemes or integrated into other projects over the past few years, and there is a continuing programme of work.

Play Schemes

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he plans to take to increase the provision of holiday play schemes by each local authority.

Mr. Tracey: It is for individual local authorities to determine which projects to support from their own resources or from resources allocated to them through specific programmes such as the urban programme, within any relevant guidelines. In 1986-87 support for children's play projects through the urban programme totalled about £6·6 million.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the breakdown of the 8,000 jobs referred to in the 1985-86 annual report of the London Docklands Development Corporation as having been created in its area under categories, transferred from outside the area, development completed or initiated prior to 1981, employment by the corporation, and any other major category listed on an annual basis.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the sums spent by the London Docklands Development Corporation since 1981 on training initiatives, stating the sums spent on each main project.

Mr. John Patten: The London Docklands Development Corporation has spent £2,218,000 on training initiatives, between July 1981 and February 1987. the sums spent on the main projects are as follows:

Project Title	*Spent at February 1987 £000*
Information Technology Centre (ITEC)	458
Skillnet	538
Stepney Green Furniture Workshop	135
Shadwell Pierhead	321
Rotherhithe Community Workshop	106
Technical Regeneration of Docklands	158
Other Training Initiatives under £100,000	502
TOTAL	£2,218

First-time Buyers' Scheme

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money is at present allocated to the first-time buyers' scheme.

Mr. Tracey: Expenditure on the Homeloan scheme is determined by the level of demand. Estimated expenditure on grants and loans under the scheme in 1987-88 is £2·1 million.

Women's Computer Centre (Camden)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the London residuary body to allow Camden borough council to secure the work of the women's computer centre by transferring the lease of Wesley house to the council.

Mr. Chope: No. I understand that the council of the London borough of Camden has offered to acquire Wesley house from the London residuary body, which has resolved to dispose of it to the council at market value.

Homelessness

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures for the numbers of households accepted as homeless in the London borough of Southwark for each year since such figures were first compiled.

Mr. Tracey: The numbers of households accepted as homeless are as follows:

Year	*Number*
1978	558
1979	651
1980	680
1981	[1]700
1982	808
1983	1,337
1984	1,527
1985	1,443
[2]1986	1,170

[1] Estimated.
[2] Nine months.

The current legislation on homelessness came into operation in December 1977, and now forms part of the 1985 Housing Act.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in the London borough of Southwark in January 1987 and the equivalent dates for 1986, 1985, 1984 and 1983; and what information he has as to the present cost to the London borough of Southwark of keeping people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mr. Tracey: The latest date for which information on bed-and-breakfast accommodation is available is September 1986. The number of households accommodated in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at the end of September in each year since 1983 is as follows:

At end September	*Number*
1983	0
1984	32
1985	52
1986	101

The cost of bed-and-breakfast accommodation during 1985-86 was £630,155 gross and £606,591 net.

Urban Programme (Lambeth)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why the urban programme resources for the London borough of Lambeth have been reduced from an estimated outturn of £13·2 million in 1986-87 to an allocation of £12·8 million in 1987-88.

Mr. Tracey: There is strong competition for urban programme resources. They are allocated to local authorities on the basis both of their needs, and of their performance in delivering programmes which meet ministerial priorities. Lambeth still has the largest allocation in London.

Local Authority Current Expenditure

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much local authority current expenditure has risen in real terms since 1978-79.

Mr. Chope: Local authority net current expenditure in England has risen by 13 per cent. in real terms (based on net current expenditure in cash terms, adjusted to constant prices using the GDP deflator) over the period 1978-79 to 1986-87.

Housing Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the cost or receipts to public funds at the local and national level in the current financial year of *(a)* subsidies to local authority and new town housing net of rents receivable before any remission to tenants on account of housing benefit and other remissions, *(b)* receipts from the sale of local authority and new town housing, *(c)* mortgage interest tax relief on private housing and *(d)* housing and other benefits to tenants of local authority and private landlords, respectively.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Empty Houses

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to *(a)* how many and *(b)* what percentage of houses in (i) the public and (ii) the private sector in each local housing authority area are empty at the latest available date.

Mr. John Patten: The latest information is for April 1986, from the English authorities' housing investment programme returns, and it is included in the table which follows. All authorities provided figures for their own stock and these have been shown separately; they exclude closed dwellings, of which there were 1,700 in England. Authorities' information about other vacant housing is generally less accurate and some authorities were unable to provide estimates.

Vacant dwellings, England: April 1986
Numbers and percentage of stock

Region 1: North including Cumbria

Local Authority	*Local Authority*		*Other Public plus Housing Association*		*Private*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
County—Cleveland						
Hartlepool	194	1·7	15	0·9	780	3·5
Langbaurgh	505	3·0	29	2·2	1,490	3·8
Middlesbrough	428	2·4	27	1·0	1,030	3·0
Stockton-on-Tees	476	2·5	41	2·1	1,494	3·2
County—Cumbria						
Allerdale	118	1·8	170	3·3	1,863	6·9
Barrow-in-Furness	77	1·6	7	2·1	801	3·3
Carlisle	379	3·2	62	5·4	1,559	5·6
Copeland	148	2·3	74	2·0	990	5·6
Eden	41	1·6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
South Lakeland	26	0·5	n.a.	n.a.	1,145	3·3
County—Durham						
Chester-le-Street	175	2·3	n.a.	n.a.	273	2·1
Darlington	177	2·1	0	0·0	1,656	5·5
Derwentside	302	2·4	72	6·8	1,192	5·4
Durham	144	1·3	76	5·2	798	4·0
Easington	760	4·1	362	9·1	707	4·1
Sedgefield	575	3·8	44	3·4	562	2·9
Teesdale	33	2·5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Wear Valley	72	0·9	18	1·5	632	3·6
County—Northumberland						
Alnwick	35	1·2	0	0·0	0	0·0
Berwick-upon-Tweed	7	0·2	0	0·0	n.a.	n.a.
Blyth Valley	218	2·2	39	2·0	550	3·0
Castle Morpeth	35	0·9	n.a.	n.a.	247	1·8
Tynedale	7	0·2	26	5·1	n.a.	n.a.
Wansbeck	130	1·4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
County—Tyne and Wear						
Gateshead	1,825	5·1	n.a.	n.a.	1,419	3·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,336	2·9	244	3·9	2,931	4·7
North Tyneside	1,310	4·6	106	3·3	2,040	4·0
South Tyneside	298	1·0	47	1·4	808	2·6
Sunderland	1,527	2·9	117	2·1	2,606	4·4

Region 2: Yorks and Humberside

Local Authority	*Local Authority*		*Other Public plus Housing Association*		*Private*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
County—Humberside						
Beverley	22	0·4	0	0·0	1,097	3·1
Boothferry	81	1·7	20	12·0	1,300	6·7
Cleethorpes	22	0·6	0	0·0	n.a.	n.a.
East Yorkshire	46	0·9	n.a.	n.a.	1,400	5·0
Glanford	27	0·7	0	0·0	1,116	5·0
Great Grimsby	111	1·3	28	4·4	833	3·2
Holderness	6	0·2	12	4·8	1,135	6·9
Kingston upon Hull	800	1·7	50	2·2	3,150	5·6
Scunthorpe	184	2·0	7	2·0	478	3·2
County—North Yorkshire						
Craven	34	1·5	0	0·0	540	3·0
Hambleton	12	0·2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Harrogate	68	1·1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Richmondshire	77	2·8	300	13·8	335	2·6
Ryedale	15	0·4	4	0·3	1,403	4·8
Scarborough	117	1·6	23	2·7	1,605	4·2
Selby	44	0·8	13	3·2	n.a.	n.a.

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
York	82	0·8	5	0·5	800	2·7
County—South Yorkshire						
Barnsley	598	1·9	71	2·8	1,674	3·1
Doncaster	595	1·7	28	2·9	2,104	2·8
Rotherham	672	2·0	113	2·5	n.a.	n.a.
Sheffield	3,027	3·4	183	4·3	5,539	4·5
County—West Yorkshire						
Bradford	1,795	4·8	n.a.	n.a.	5,523	4·1
Calderdale	796	5·1	10	0·5	3,465	5·8
Kirklees	981	2·7	29	1·4	6,777	6·0
Leeds	1,076	1·2	120	1·6	6,120	3·3
Wakefield	512	1·1	312	8·1	1,866	2·6

Region 3: East Midlands

Local Authority	Local authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
County—Derbyshire						
Amber Valley	78	1·0	36	5·0	1,451	4·0
Bolsover	153	1·8	40	8·9	665	3·4
Chesterfield	206	1·5	30	3·9	1,261	5·0
Derby	549	2·6	114	2·6	3,470	5·6
Erewash	122	1·5	27	5·5	1,509	4·6
High Peak	49	0·8	n.a.	n.a.	1,574	6·0
North East Derbyshire	119	1·1	11	5·2	350	1·3
South Derbyshire	29	0·6	10	3·5	1,388	6·5
West Derbyshire	10	0·2	16	11·8	1,587	6·9
County—Leicestershire						
Blaby	12	0·4	18	4·3	591	2·3
Charnwood	30	0·4	0	0·0	1,570	3·5
Harborough	20	0·6	7	3·0	571	2·8
Hinckley and Bosworth	49	1·0	0	0·0	1,084	3·6
Leicester	947	2·8	n.a.	n.a.	4,568	6·6
Melton	49	1·8	42	12·5	572	4·1
North West Leicestershire	53	0·9	41	4·1	1,180	5·0
Oadby and Wigston	32	1·7	n.a.	n.a.	404	2·3
Rutland	8	0·4	0	0·0	314	3·5
County—Lincolnshire						
Boston	20	0·3	13	2·5	839	5·5
East Lindsey	75	1·3	127	10·0	2,531	6·4
Lincoln	343	3·3	37	4·6	960	4·5
North Kesteven	42	0·8	697	40·6	1,200	4·9
South Holland	37	0·7	0	0·0	804	4·0
South Kesteven	121	1·3	90	13·5	1,831	6·0
West Lindsey	92	1·9	217	17·1	0	0·0
County—Northamptonshire						
Corby	259	2·6	2	2·0	398	4·1
Daventry	72	1·5	2	1·2	545	3·0
East Northamptonshire	21	0·4	n.a.	n.a.	745	3·6
Kettering	93	1·6	13	3·5	943	4·1
Northampton	445	2·5	50	4·3	2,105	4·5
South Northamptonshire	22	0·5	0	0·0	1,002	4·7
Wellingborough	99	1·4	0	0·0	754	4·1
County—Nottinghamshire						
Ashfield	205	1·9	63	5·2	1,249	4·2
Bassetlaw	81	0·8	72	5·3	1,726	n.a.
Broxstowe	90	1·3	n.a.	n.a.	803	2·4
Gedling	104	1·8	54	3·1	839	2·4
Mansfield	209	2·0	60	3·6	n.a.	n.a.
Newark and Sherwood	109	1·3	72	3·1	1,169	3·8
Nottingham	1,348	3·0	326	5·7	3,666	6·1
Rushcliffe	76	1·7	40	7·2	0	0·0

Region 4: East Anglia

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
County—Cambridgeshire						
Cambridge	151	1·4	35	2·0	64	0·2
East Cambridgeshire	28	0·6	13	4·2	883	5·1
Fenland	28	0·5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Huntingdonshire	93	1·1	217	8·8	1,931	5·0
Peterborough	243	2·5	233	2·4	1,778	4·8
South Cambridgeshire	62	0·8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
County—Norfolk						
Breckland	233	3·1	n.a.	n.a.	2,280	7·0
Broadland	10	0·3	n.a.	n.a.	1,460	4·1
Great Yarmouth	69	0·9	26	5·3	1,395	5·2
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	70	0·7	117	5·9	1,800	4·4
North Norfolk	62	1·0	400	30·8	1,977	6·1
Norwich	570	2·4	54	2·4	1,676	6·2
South Norfolk	17	0·3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
County—Suffolk						
Babergh	39	0·7	n.a.	n.a.	1,430	5·8
Forest Heath	5	0·1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Ipswich	167	1·4	49	2·0	941	2·7
Mid Suffolk	28	0·6	5	1·3	1,005	4·3
St Edmundsbury	71	0·8	20	1·4	n.a.	n.a.
Suffolk Coastal	90	1·5	n.a.	n.a.	1,326	3·7
Waveney	88	1·4	40	3·0	1,677	4·6

Region 5: Greater London

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent.
Inner London						
City of London	28	1·8	0	0·0	35	2·1
Camden	957	2·8	139	2·4	4,857	11·0
Hackney	2,872	6·3	577	6·8	2,232	9·9
Hammersmith and Fulham	654	3·5	n.a.	n.a.	4,552	10·8
Haringey	670	2·8	205	3·5	3,588	6·8
Islington	2,271	5·5	484	5·5	3,200	12·9
Kensington and Chelsea	378	4·3	691	6·1	8,080	14·5
Lambeth	1,328	2·7	695	7·1	n.a.	n.a.
Lewisham	1,568	3·8	328	5·5	2,038	4·2
Newham	2,420	7·8	362	8·9	2,127	4·4
Southwark	1,900	3·1	483	5·8	2,707	11·3
Tower Hamlets	3,200	6·6	277	5·0	405	5·0
Wandsworth	1,397	3·7	233	3·2	2,560	4·0
Westminster	739	3·2	504	4·9	7,000	10·1
Outer London						
Barking and Dagenham	588	1·8	n.a.	n.a.	525	2·0
Barnet	354	2·0	116	2·0	2,884	3·1
Bexley	124	1·1	107	2·0	3,367	5·1
Brent	844	4·0	386	5·4	3,370	5·2
Bromley	201	1·2	n.a.	n.a.	3,200	3·2
Croydon	392	2·0	n.a.	n.a.	3,267	3·2
Ealing	523	2·6	n.a.	n.a.	2,123	2·6
Enfield	467	2·4	n.a.	n.a.	2,423	3·0
Greenwich	912	2·5	212	4·5	2,362	5·1
Harrow	164	2·0	96	6·1	1,068	1·6
Havering	321	1·9	64	4·4	1,651	2·3
Hillingdon	501	2·8	74	2·0	2,866	4·0
Hounslow	479	2·4	71	1·9	2,630	4·7
Kingston upon Thames	99	1·5	2	0·1	1,433	3·0
Merton	301	2·4	115	6·6	3,779	7·0
Redbridge	326	2·9	62	3·4	2,612	3·4
Richmond upon Thames	132	1·3	30	1·3	3,124	5·1
Sutton	179	1·5	n.a.	n.a.	844	1·6
Waltham Forest	462	2·3	121	3·8	2,520	4·0

Region 6: South East excluding London

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Associations		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
County—Bedfordshire						
Luton	102	0·9	62	4·2	1,665	3·4
Mid Bedfordshire	26	0·3	n.a.	n.a.	1,268	4·0
North Bedfordshire	327	4·0	133	6·8	2,440	6·0
South Bedfordshire	109	1·4	130	16·8	699	2·2
County—Berkshire						
Bracknell	91	0·9	27	1·5	400	1·9
Newbury	57	0·7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Reading	318	3·3	8	0·7	1,224	3·0
Slough	149	1·4	5	1·3	1,000	4·0
Windsor and Maidenhead	53	0·7	103	6·2	583	1·3
Wokingham	69	1·9	56	3·6	711	1·8
County—Buckinghamshire						
Aylesbury Vale	80	0·7	n.a.	n.a.	1,386	3·6
Chiltern	107	2·1	n.a.	n.a.	0	0·0
Milton Keynes	129	1·8	331	2·3	n.a.	n.a.
South Bucks	38	1·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Wycombe	217	2·1	48	4·0	1,655	3·5
County—East Sussex						
Brighton	143	1·3	71	4·9	2,991	5·8
Eastbourne	32	0·6	9	0·7	n.a.	n.a.
Hastings	50	1·0	6	0·8	1,525	5·4
Hove	50	1·1	n.a.	n.a.	3,121	8·9
Lewes	64	1·5	6	0·7	1,264	4·3
Rother	100	2·5	3	0·6	952	3·0
Wealden	67	1·5	4	0·4	1,280	2·9
County—Essex						
Basildon	77	1·3	294	1·8	n.a.	n.a.
Braintree	173	1·5	n.a.	n.a.	1,800	5·6
Brentwood	40	1·1	27	1·7	650	2·9
Castle Point	23	1·0	0	0·0	670	2·2
Chelmsford	294	3·0	81	7·0	0	0·0
Colchester	68	0·7	197	6·6	1,685	4·0
Epping Forest	224	2·4	41	7·6	1,153	3·2
Harlow	164	0·9	6	1·7	258	2·3
Maldon	10	0·4	11	3·1	466	2·7
Rochford	6	0·2	0	0·0	0	0·0
Southend-on-Sea	73	0·9	0	0·0	2,392	4·1
Tendring	14	0·3	43	3·2	2,160	4·2
Thurrock	292	1·9	n.a	n.a.	918	3·0
Uttlesford	35	0·9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
County—Hampshire						
Basingstoke and Deane	111	0·9	47	2·2	789	2·1
East Hampshire	71	1·4	131	12·7	840	2·7
Eastleigh	115	2·2	5	0·6	1,170	3·7
Fareham	19	0·6	50	12·5	735	2·3
Gosport	37	0·7	460	9·7	710	3·5
Hart	9	0·3	10	0·8	930	3·8
Havant	69	1·7	101	1·2	800	2·4
New Forest	38	0·5	31	2·6	2,290	4·1
Portsmouth	675	4·6	282	8·0	1,704	3·1
Rushmoor	115	2·1	344	10·7	815	4·1
Southampton	536	2·5	125	4·3	2,200	4·0
Test Valley	437	5·8	251	15·0	449	1·7
Winchester	92	1·4	32	2·8	1,230	4·1
County—Hertfordshire						
Broxbourne	85	1·7	n.a.	n.a.	952	4·0
Dacorum	237	1·5	35	2·0	928	2·8
East Hertfordshire	93	1·1	84	13·3	1,042	3·1
Hertsmere	90	1·1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
North Hertfordshire	121	1·0	16	1·0	1,135	3·8
St. Albans	39	0·5	60	4·7	800	2·1
Stevenage	125	0·9	0	0·0	268	2·0
Three Rivers	120	2·0	50	4·6	486	2·2
Watford	55	0·9	3	0·7	0	0·0
Welwyn Hatfield	209	1·4	n.a.	n.a.	825	4·0
Isle of Wight						

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Associations		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Medina	25	0·8	106	10·7	769	3·0
South Wight	7	0·3	0	0·0	n.a.	n.a.
County—Kent						
Ashford	164	1·9	3	0·6	1,044	4·0
Canterbury	88	1·2	15	1·0	1,397	3·4
Dartford	116	1·7	23	3·4	686	3·2
Dover	104	1·3	39	1·8	1,563	4·9
Gillingham	75	1·7	n.a.	n.a.	1,226	4·0
Gravesham	133	1·6	15	3·5	1,023	3·7
Maidstone	102	1·1	71	6·2	703	1·8
Rochester upon Medway	361	3·4	43	4·8	2,100	4·8
Sevenoaks	122	1·6	0	0·0	850	2·5
Shepway	27	0·6	43	4·0	1,145	3·4
Swale	78	0·9	n.a.	n.a.	1,987	5·5
Thanet	42	0·6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Tonbridge and Malling	45	0·6	19	2·5	743	2·5
Tunbridge Wells	26	0·4	57	4·7	1,428	4·5
County—Oxfordshire						
Cherwell	72	0·9	0	0·0	1,270	4·0
Oxford	160	1·9	14	1·1	1,281	4·6
South Oxfordshire	77	1·0	24	0·9	566	1·4
Vale of White Horse	76	1·2	38	2·0	492	1·6
West Oxfordshire	38	0·8	52	2·9	666	2·6
County—Surrey						
Elmbridge	127	2·2	33	3·0	1,280	3·2
Epsom and Ewell	30	1·3	n.a.	n.a.	540	2·3
Guildford	132	1·8	16	0·9	1,226	3·1
Mole Valley	21	0·5	42	5·1	900	3·6
Reigate and Banstead	128	1·8	71	3·8	1,034	2·9
Runnymede	32	0·7	12	1·7	830	3·5
Spelthorne	31	0·7	n.a.	n.a.	0	0·0
Surrey Heath	35	1·0	138	13·7	1,057	4·4
Tandridge	36	0·9	35	7·0	268	1·1
Waverley	53	0·8	0	0·0	754	2·1
Woking	211	4·4	n.a.	n.a.	499	1·8
County—West Sussex						
Adur	31	0·8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Arun	41	0·8	0	0·0	898	1·8
Chichester	64	0·9	42	3·7	n.a.	n.a.
Crawley	119	1·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Horsham	52	0·8	5	0·5	893	2·6
Mid Sussex	32	0·6	n.a.	n.a.	1,200	3·1
Worthing	28	0·9	11	0·9	1,700	4·5

Region 7: South West

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
County—Avon						
Bath	156	2·1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Bristol	448	1·1	50	0·8	5,137	4·6
Kingswood	70	1·4	13	2·0	966	3·5
Northavon	64	1·1	66	8·5	1,024	2·7
Wansdyke	41	0·8	n.a	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Woodspring	229	2·6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
County—Cornwall and Isles of Scilly						
Caradon	16	0·3	0	0·0	1,438	5·6
Carrick	7	0·1	44	17·5	1,150	4·2
Kerrier	44	1·1	n.a.	n.a.	1,198	4·0
North Cornwall	26	0·6	45	5·4	839	3·4
Penwith	49	1·2	5	3·5	1.311	6·0
Restormel	1	0·0	0	0·0	1,275	4·4
Isles of Scilly	4	2·8	1	100·0	n.a.	n.a.
County—Devon						
East Devon	60	1·0	47	8·0	1,153	2·7
Exeter	96	1·2	26	1·3	n.a.	n.a.
Mid Devon	41	0·8	0	0·0	862	4·6

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
North Devon	32	0·7	20	3·1	553	2·0
Plymouth	254	1·1	204	2·8	3,146	4·9
South Hams	37	0·9	0	0·0	1,161	4·2
Teignbridge	77	1·5	n.a.	n.a.	1,360	3·7
Torbay	50	1·1	44	4·1	2,125	4·6
Torridge	12	0·5	0	0·0	400	2·2
West Devon	31	1·7	44	10·2	803	5·2
County—Dorset						
Bournemouth	76	1·1	0	0·0	1,316	2·4
Christchurch	19	1·1	6	1·9	520	2·4
North Dorset	31	0·9	34	3·1	447	2·9
Poole	21	0·3	18	1·4	1,613	3·5
Purbeck	16	0·7	n.a.	n.a.	820	5·5
West Dorset	32	0·5	n.a.	n.a.	1,046	3·8
Weymouth and Portland	36	0·9	160	14·3	360	1·9
Wimbourne	15	0·6	n.a.	n.a.	889	3·1
County—Gloucestershire						
Cheltenham	59	0·9	20	1·9	1,826	6·4
Cotswold	27	0·5	2	0·2	1,700	7·3
Forest of Dean	42	0·8	n.a.	n.a.	1,388	6·1
Gloucester	74	1·1	26	3·3	1,286	4·7
Stroud	98	1·3	n.a.	n.a.	1,633	4·8
Tewkesbury	54	1·3	n.a.	n.a.	813	3·0
County—Somerset						
Mendip	37	0·6	n.a.	n.a.	1,248	4·4
Sedgemoor	46	0·7	n.a.	n.a.	1,151	3·8
South Somerset	62	0·5	153	18·2	2,065	4·8
Taunton Deane	43	0·5	67	7·8	1,307	4·8
West Somerset	19	0·9	n.a.	n.a.	400	3·5
County—Wiltshire						
Kennet	50	0·9	387	11·4	764	4·5
North Wiltshire	78	1·0	343	12·7	1,138	3·7
Salisbury	65	0·8	100	3·0	1,242	4·2
Thamesdown	294	2·0	27	1·3	1,966	4·1
West Wiltshire	96	1·4	41	3·2	1,251	4·0

Region 8: West Midlands

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
County—Hereford and Worcester						
Bromsgrove	87	2·0	n.a.	n.a.	581	2·3
Hereford	27	0·5	38	5·6	342	2·5
Leominster	18	0·9	9	7·0	636	4·8
Malvern Hills	116	2·1	n.a.	n.a.	1,472	4·7
Redditch	210	2·1	6	1·2	443	2·6
South Herefordshire	5	0·2	0	0·0	836	5·1
Worcester	31	0·5	9	1·0	780	3·5
Wychavon	98	1·2	0	0·0	979	3·3
Wyre Forest	91	1·2	0	0·0	1,062	3·8
County—Shropshire						
Bridgnorth	29	0·8	99	14·3	613	4·2
North Shropshire	14	0·4	n.a.	n.a.	640	4·2
Oswestry	15	0·5	0	0·0	670	6·9
Shrewsbury and Atcham	60	0·8	59	8·8	936	3·4
South Shropshire	44	2·3	0	0·0	1,250	9·4
The Wrekin	208	1·9	560	5·8	1,465	5·1
County—Staffordshire						
Cannock Chase	105	1·2	28	1·6	748	3·6
East Staffordshire	118	1·7	25	3·8	1,804	6·1
Lichfield	118	1·9	4	0·4	730	2·9
Newcastle-under-Lyme	189	1·5	79	6·8	1,096	3·2
South Staffordshire	88	1·4	22	2·5	848	2·7
Stafford	147	1·8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Staffordshire Moorlands	46	1·1	n.a.	n.a.	1,274	4·0
Stoke-on-Trent	521	1·8	144	4·7	3,655	5·4
Tamworth	355	4·6	1	0·1	596	3·7

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
County—Warwickshire						
North Warwickshire	60	1·2	14	2·4	829	4·9
Nuneaton and Bedworth	171	1·8	26	1·4	1,108	3·5
Rugby	106	1·9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Stratford-on-Avon	82	1·1	n.a.	n.a.	992	3·0
Warwick	61	0·8	25	1·3	1,118	3·1
County—West Midlands						
Birmingham	3,106	2·6	1,110	5·0	6,150	2·5
Coventry	957	3·8	91	2·1	3,370	3·7
Dudley	739	2·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Sandwell	2,485	4·5	90	3·3	2,772	4·5
Solihull	354	2·2	23	2·0	1,175	2·0
Walsall	929	2·4	43	1·8	1,100	1·9
Wolverhampton	1,926	4·9	160	4·8	1,846	3·3

Region 9: North West excluding Cumbria

Local Authority	Local Authority		Other Public plus Housing Association		Private	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
County—Cheshire						
Chester	116	1·4	78	6·9	1,547	4·3
Congleton	41	0·8	26	12·9	1,262	4·8
Crewe and Nantwich	203	2·4	30	4·6	1,529	5·0
Ellesmere Port and Neston	79	0·9	18	3·2	510	2·4
Halton	154	1·6	409	4·0	1,118	4·4
Macclesfield	223	2·6	22	0·7	2,230	4·7
Vale Royal	162	1·7	19	4·3	1,423	4·3
Warrington	276	2·1	251	4·5	2,170	4·3
County—Greater Manchester						
Bolton	542	2·1	60	1·9	2,926	3·9
Bury	350	3·0	120	3·6	1,627	3·0
Manchester	4,939	6·2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Oldham	1,419	5·5	61	2·5	n.a.	n.a.
Rochdale	848	3·9	330	6·5	2,500	4·8
Salford	1,908	4·6	102	3·2	0	0·0
Stockport	365	2·2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Tameside	455	2·2	208	3·2	2,761	4·7
Trafford	283	2·1	156	3·1	2,657	4·0
Wigan	577	1·7	104	7·8	3,200	3·8
County—Lancashire						
Blackburn	362	2·6	97	6·0	2,555	6·5
Blackpool	154	2·1	0	0·0	1,590	2·9
Burnley	557	7·6	56	6·1	1,690	5·4
Chorley	97	2·2	119	7·8	1,598	5·4
Fylde	20	0·8	59	9·3	1,450	5·5
Hyndburn	206	4·5	37	8·0	1,415	5·3
Lancaster	86	1·6	n.a.	n.a.	1,372	3·2
Pendle	97	1·9	25	8·0	1,340	4·5
Preston	305	2·8	173	4·9	2,091	5·7
Ribble Valley	28	1·5	0	0·0	896	5·3
Rossendale	196	3·3	47	10·2	1,525	7·6
South Ribble	72	1·7	16	0·6	1,340	4·4
West Lancashire	185	1·7	13	3·6	1,102	3·9
Wyre	56	1·4	0	0·0	1,131	3·2
County—Merseyside						
Knowsley	368	1·4	20	1·8	1,202	3·9
Liverpool	7,704	11·9	1,177	6·3	5,159	4·5
St. Helens	251	1·2	61	2·3	2,393	5·1
Sefton	237	1·3	n.a.	n.a.	6,438	7·0
Wirral	694	2·8	150	3·4	5,003	4·7

n.a. = Not available.

Rates

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether a grant will be made to local authorities to publicise the means of payment of rates by those who will receive income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Such a grant is not necessary. The rate demands and notice of rates and precepts rules 1985 provide that each rate demand note shall contain a statement about the rights of ratepayers to elect to pay rates by instalments; and shall also give a general indication of the right to a rebate, and contain a statement that the rating authority will, on request, provide further information about the availability of such a rebate.

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give the total figure that he now expects to provide in rate support grant to English counties in 1987-88; and if he will also list the amount payable to each county;

(2) if he will list county by county the population figures upon which the 1987-88 rate support grant has been based.

Mr. Chope: The total amount available for block grant for counties in England in 1987-88 is £3,814 million for total expenditure equal to the settlement assumption. Details of individual authorities' grant entitlement and information about population data are included in tables which were made available in the Vote Office and Libraries of the House on 20 March 1987.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider establishing a national weekly collection system for rates payments by persons on income support through the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: All ratepayers have the right to pay their annual rates bills in at least 10 instalments. It is for individual local authorities to decide whether they wish to allow more than ten instalments, and to establish payment arrangements appropriate to their areas.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by authority what projected rate fund balances appear in their rates estimates for 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: The information is currently being returned and is not yet available for most authorities. The return date for the inquiry is 1 April.

Salcombe Estuary

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the degree of consultation with the local harbour board undertaken by the Nature Conservancy Council prior to the designation of the entire Salcombe estuary as a site of special scientific interest;

(2) what representations he has received on the designation of the entire Salcombe estuary as a site of special scientific interest in the light of the proposed dredging of the low-water and other channels for fishing vessels.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these question shortly.

London Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts are made by his Department to determine the amounts spent by London authorities on policies concerned with women's rights, gay rights, local economic development and support for ethnic minorities.

Mr. Chope: Those necessary for the work of the Department, and consistent with the fact that the primary responsibilities for discretionary spending by local authorities rests with those authorities.

Local Government Reform (Detriment Payments)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects that all eligible staff of the abolished authorities will have received their full entitlements to detriment payments.

Mr. Chope: Entitlements to financial detriment compensation are payable on a continuing basis for a period of eight years from the date when the loss or diminution of emoluments occurs. Such entitlements cannot be paid in full until this period has expired.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the reasons for the delay in determining the detriment payments to the 388 eligible staff from the Greater London council.

Mr. Chope: This is a matter for the London residuary body.

Youth Centres, Bradford

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he is to take a decision on an application, submitted by Bradford corporation, under the urban programme, for a Bangladeshi youth centre in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: A decision will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 12 March, *Official Report*, column 269, he can now announce his decision on the application submitted by Bradford council under the urban programme to replace the West Bowling youth centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: This project was approved on 13 March.

MV St. Giles

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the MV St. Giles at Rosyth naval base.

Mr. Chope: Dredging services at Rosyth naval base are undertaken partially by contract and partially by the PSA's own vessel, the St. Giles. The National Audit Office recommended that there was no special need to retain an in-house dredger at Rosyth and that all dredging should be undertaken by contract. The recommendation is at present under consideration by the Department.

Landscape Conservation

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the organisations that have responded to his Department's document entitled "Protecting the Countryside: the Government's Consultation Proposals for Landscape Conservation Orders"; and if he will make a statement about the responses received.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Ammonia Emissions

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for annual emissions of ammonia in the United Kingdom; and what has been the trend in emission levels since 1960.

Mr. Waldegrave: The university of Utrecht calculated that annual emissions of ammonia in the United Kingdom in 1982(from animals, fertilisers and industry) were of the order of 405,000 tonnes. A similar study undertaken by Imperial college, London in 1980 calculated that there had been a slow increase in emissions of ammonia arising from livestock (which make up some 80 per cent. of total national emissions) from 321,000 tonnes in 1960, through 336,000 tonnes in 1970 to 366,000 tonnes in 1980.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will estimate the input of inorganic nitrogen to the North sea from the atmosphere and originating from United Kingdom sources; and what assessment he has made as to the significance of this input in a whole sea context;

(2) if he will estimate total United Kingdom inputs to the North sea for 1983, 1984 and 1985 of lead, cadmium, mercury, zinc, arsenic and copper; and if he will indicate the proportions of the overall inputs to the North sea that these figures represent.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will write to the hon. Member.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the United Kingdom petrol market he estimates will be given over to unleaded petrol by 31 December.

Mr. Waldegrave: The recent announcement, by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, of a reduction in the tax on unleaded petrol can be expected to stimulate a still wider availability of this new fuel, which is already on sale at more than 200 stations throughout the United Kingdom. It is too early yet to estimate how quickly this change will prompt demand by the motorist for unleaded petrol.

Lord Dowding (Statue)

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is intended to erect a statue to the memory of the late Air Chief Marshal, Lord Dowding, for his leading contribution in the battle of Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Allan Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet reached decisions on the proposed reorganisation of the United Kingdom territorial organisation of the Property Services Agency.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend and I have decided to proceed with the PSA reorganisation from 1 April 1987, although in a number of cases closure will be effected over time and some staff may remain outstationed in the interim. We are satisfied that the proposals to merge the regional and area tiers of management will yield considerable managerial and cost benefits.

The pattern of regional offices in England and Wales will be unchanged and the effect on existing area offices and area estates offices is given in the table. This excludes the south-east region, where reorganisation has already begun, and the London region, which is the subject of a separate study.

Although in Scotland the Aberdeen and Glasgow area offices will close, we have decided to retain a substantial PSA presence in both locations to handle maintenance and estates functions. All design work will ultimately be concentrated in Edinburgh.

The current area office at Rosyth will close with essential functions being transferred to Edinburgh.

PSA region/ directorate and headquarters	*Area office*	*Remarks*
Scotland		
Edinburgh	Aberdeen[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Glasgow[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Rosyth	To close
North West		
Manchester	Lisburn[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Preston[1]	Retained as an outstation (Note 1)
North East		
Leeds	Newcastle[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Leeds	To close
	York	To close
Midland		
Birmingham	Nottingham[1]	To close
	Shrewsbury[1]	To close
	Birmingham[1]	To close
Wales		
Cardiff	Colwyn Bay[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Haverfordwest	Retained as an outstation (Note 2)
	Cardiff	To close
Eastern		
Cambridge	Cambridge/USAF	Merged with Region (Note 3)
	Newmarket	Retained as an outstation (Note 4)
	Colchester	Retained as an outstation
Southern		
Reading	Aldershot[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Bournemouth[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Abingdon[1]	To close (Note 5)
South West		
Bristol	Cheltenham	To close
	Plymouth[1]	Retained as an outstation
	Bedford	Retained as an outstation (Note 6)
	Bristol	To close

[1] Also an Estates Office.

Notes:

(1) Preston will become a District Works/Estates Office.
(2) An Estates Office will be retained at Brecon.
(3) USAF services strengthened by establishing two commands.
(4) Pending availability of accommodation or redevelopment of the PSA site at Cambridge.
(5) Closure of the Abingdon Office will take place when suitable accommodation is available in Reading.
(6) Defence Land Agent, Durrington will be retained.
(7) In a number of cases closure will be effected over time and some staff may remain outstationed in the interim.
(8) With a few exceptions design staff will, in the long term, be located at the Regional Headquarters.

Inner Urban Areas

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those local authorities in England and Wales which are designated or include areas that are designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978; and in respect of which of these authorities arrangements have been made with him under section 7 of the Act.

Mr. Trucey [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987]: The following districts have been specified as designated districts under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978. Under the Act, the council of both the district and the county which includes the designated district are designated district authorities. The districts indicated [1] are those in relation to which special arrangements have been entered into under section 7 of the Act.

Barnsley
Birmingham[1]
Blackburn
Blaenau Gwent
Bolton
Bradford
Brent
Burnley
Cardiff
Coventry
Cynon Valley
Doncaster
Ealing
Gateshead[1]
Greenwich
Hackney[1]
Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey
Hartlepool
Islington[1]
Kingston upon Hull
Knowsley
Lambeth[1]
Langbaurgh
Leeds
Leicester
Lewisham
Liverpool[1]
Manchester[1]
Merthyr Tydfil
Middlesbrough
Newcastle
Newham
Newport
North Tyneside
Nottingham
Ogwr
Oldham
Port Talbot
Rhondda
Rhymney Valley
Rochdale
Rotherham
St. Helens
Salford[1]
Sandwell
Sefton
Sheffield
South Tyneside
Southwark
Sunderland
Swansea
Tower Hamlets
Walsall
Wigan
Wirral
Wolverhampton

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to extend the terms of compulsory purchase orders to include adequate compensation for any inconvenience experienced by the owner of a property.

Mr. Trucey [*pursuant to his reply*, Friday 20 March 1987]: In accordance with the Land Compensation Acts, the compensation payable for compulsorily purchased land already consists in most cases of the market value of the land (without taking into account the effect on that value of the scheme for which the land is being taken), a disturbance payment, and a home loss payment where the claimant is displaced from a home where he has lived for at least five years. The disturbance payment covers such items as the claimants's legal and surveyors' fees, removal costs and reconnection charges.

New Build Housing Schemes

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the share respectively of *(a)* public direct labour schemes and *(b)* private contractors' schemes in local authority house-building for the years 1985 and 1986, respectively, in (i) England and Wales and (ii) Greater London.

Mr. Trucey [*pursuant to his reply*, Friday 20 March 1987]: The numbers of local authority new build housing schemes, based on returns made to the Department by local authorities of tenders accepted, are as follows:

	(i) England and Wales		*(ii) Greater London*	
	1985	*1986*	*1985*	*1986*
(a) Public direct labour schemes	37	35	4	3
(b) Private contractors' schemes	541	515	39	23

NORTHERN IRELAND

Warning Devices (Republic Territory)

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if details have been furnished to the Government of the Irish Republic of the disciplinary action taken against the Army officers held responsible for the recent placing of warning devices on the territory of the Republic.

Mr. Tom King: No.

Motor Vehicles (Offences)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures for Northern Ireland corresponding to those published for England and Wales in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles England and Wales" issued by the Secretary of State for the Home Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food (Alternative Sources)

Mr. Murphy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will initiate a publicity campaign to inform the public of the availability and use of alternative sources of food from hedgerows and uncultivated land.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Butter

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what alternative methods of supporting the market are to be used by the European Economic Community Commission in place of intervention buying of butter.

Mr. Gummer: The Council regulations modifying the intervention regime in the dairy sector provide that, in the event of permanent intervention being suspended, buying in by intervention agencies may continue on the basis of competitive tenders and that other measures will be taken to maintain market stability. There is also provision for support measures for other dairy products such as cream. It is up to the Commission, taking account of the advice of the milk management committee, to decide what action is appropriate. By way of illustration, the Commission has suggested that existing schemes for the disposal of intervention stocks could be adapted to apply to current production. For butter, this would include sales to non profit-making organisations, concentrated butter for cooking and use in food manufacture.

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the per capita butter consumption of the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage of this butter was produced in New Zealand.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Consumption of butter in the United Kingdom is estimated at 5 kg per capita in 1985. The quota for imports of butter from New Zealand was equivalent to 28 per cent. of United Kingdom consumption in that year.

Pesticides

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has obtained toxicological data prepared by the International Bio Test Laboratory in Illinois and submitted by a pesticide manufacturer.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department receives toxicological data from a number of sources in support of applications for pesticide approvals. Where these include data originating from the international bio test laboratory, we require independent validation of the methodology and results of the tests involved.

Food Aid

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food where residents in the London borough of Wandsworth should make inquiries to find out the distribution point for the collection of surplus European Economic Community foods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Inquiries should be made with a local branch of one of the charitable organisations on the list which I gave on 29 January in my reply to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Mr. Corbett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list those organisations in Birmingham, by each parliamentary constituency, responsible for the distribution of surplus European Economic Community butter, cheese and beef; and on what dates distribution of each commodity began in each constituency.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March, 1987 c. *601*]: As I made clear in my reply of 11 March to the hon. Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) and for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), I do not have information on distributions by geographical area, nor do I plan to have such information compiled.

NATO Food and Agriculture Planning Committee

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the reply of 13 February 1986, *Official Report*, column *527*, if he will make the minutes of the meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Food and Agriculture Planning Committee available in the Library.

Mr. Donald Thompson: That is not possible, because the proceedings of the NATO Food and Agriculture Planning Committee are security classified by NATO.

Ice-cream

Mr. Adley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of ice-cream *(a)* manufactured and *(b)* sold in the United Kingdom contains (i) mainly milk products, (ii) some milk products and (iii) no milk products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is not readily available in the form requested. However, under the Ice-Cream Regulations 1967, ice-cream must contain not less than 5 per cent. fat, and not less than 7·5 per cent. milk solids other than fat. "Dairy" type ice-cream must contain not less than 5 per cent. milk fats, not less than 7·5 per cent. milk solids other than fat and may contain no fat other than milk fats, unless present as a result of another ingredient.

Mr. Adley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the effect on current surplus United Kingdom milk production of requiring that all ice-cream currently *(a)* sold and *(b)* manufactured in the United Kingdom be made of milk products supplied from the United Kingdom farming industry; and if he will seek to make this his policy.

Mr. Gummer: Under European Community law, it would not be possible to require that ice-cream sold or manufactured in the United Kingdom be made of milk products supplied by the United Kingdom farming industry.

Mr. Adley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to prohibit the sale of ice-cream unless it contains a substantial percentage of milk products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under the Ice-Cream Regulations 1967 ice cream must contain at least 5 per cent. fat and 7·5 per cent. milk solids other than fat. "Dairy ice cream" must contain only milk fat (other than that present as a result of the use of egg, flavours, emulsifying or stabilising agents). I understand that a good quality dairy ice cream will contain a considerably higher proportion of milk products than the minimum laid down. Consumers are therefore able to make a choice, according to the price they are prepared to pay, between ordinary ice cream, and dairy ice cream. I have no plans to amend these regulations.

Salcombe Estuary

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a grant towards the cost of dredging the low-water channel in the Salcombe estuary for commercial shellfish vessels working the shellfish quays;

(2) when he issued a consent for the dumping of the dredged soil from the low-water channel in the Salcombe estuary; and if there were any conditions attached to this consent;

(3) if he will make funds available to the Salcombe Harbour Board to fund the costs of the proposed monitoring by the Nature Conservancy Council of the disposal of the dredged soil from the low-water channel in the licensed dumping ground.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Milk

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the per capita milk consumption of the United Kingdom in the last year which figures are available; and what are the comparable figures in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Estimates of per capita consumption of liquid milk for nine member states are published by the Milk Marketing Board in "EEC Dairy Facts and Figures, 1986". The latest published figures for 1985 are as follows:

Consumption of Liquid Milk in EC Member States[1]

	kg/head
Germany	71·5
France	82·8
Italy	[2]77·7
Netherlands	93·7
Belgium	75·9
Luxembourg	83·6
United Kingdom	126·7
Irish Republic	190·5
Denmark	130·2

[1] Excluding Spain, Portugal and Greece
[2] Estimate
Source: EEC Dairy Facts and Figures 1986, Milk Marketing Board.

Cheese

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the per capita cheese consumption in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available; and what percentage of this cheese was produced in France.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Consumption of cheese in the United Kingdom is estimated at 6·5 kg per capita in 1985. There are no statistics on the consumption of cheese produced in France but imports of cheese from France in 1985 were equivalent to 3 per cent. of consumption in that year.

Outgoers Scheme

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider increasing the level of compensation under the outgoers scheme for dairy farmers.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

North Sea Fisheries (Disease Levels)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the numbers of marine vertebrate fish sampled in 1983, 1984 and 1985 with the specific objective of monitoring the disease levels in the populations present in the North sea; and if he will list the species involved.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Freezer Trawlers

Mr. Wallace asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) 17 February, *Official Report*, columns *601-602*, he will state the factors which he treats as relevant in determining the allocation of the additional licences for freezer trawlers for the pelagic fisheries.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply, 19 March c. 598*]: *It would be difficult to draw up an exhaustive list of such factors and I do not think that it would be useful to do so while the applications are still under consideration.*

Food Subsidies

Mr. Hicks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the quantities of whole milk, semi-skimmed milk, whole milk yoghurt, semi-skimmed milk yoghurt, buttermilk, natural cheese and processed cheese, supplied to each local education authority in Great Britain on which an EEC subsidy was claimed for the 1984-85 and 1985-86 school years.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March, c. *613*]: This information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Surplus food (Quality)

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many instances have occurred where supplies of surplus European Economic Community food have been withdrawn after distribution due to doubts regarding its quality.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March, c. *612*]: Only two such instances have been notified to my Department, both of them relating to the hon. Member's constituency. In either case, the product concerned was cheese purchased from commercial sources.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research has been carried out into the relationship between flouridation of water supplies and the aluminium content of water and the implications of this for the incidence of Alzheimer's disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department is aware of a recent study into the effect of boiling fluoridated water in aluminium cookware. There is no evidence that aluminium by itself is the cause of Alzheimer's disease and much evidence points to the contrary. Nor is there any conclusive evidence that aluminium is a contributory factor. An initial epidemiological investigation into the relationship of water quality to Alzheimer's disease is being conducted by the Medical Research Council neuroendocrinology unit in Newcastle. The first results are expected in 1988.

AIDS

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he intends to introduce further screening for the AIDS-related virus HTLV I;

(2) whether his Department is monitoring the number of people in Britain with the AIDS-related virus HTLV I; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what figures he has for the number of people carrying the HTLV I virus;

(2) what plans he has to test blood supplies for the HTLV I virus;

(3) what plans he has to combat the spread of the HTLV I virus; what facilities he is making available to screen people for the HTLV I virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Members have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the current cost of screening blood donations for the AIDS virus;

(2) whether he has any plans to review the current screening programme for the AIDS virus in blood donations; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement outlining the procedures currently adopted for the screening of blood donations for the AIDS virus;

(4) what efforts are made to trace the donors of blood which is found through the screening process to contain the AIDS virus;

(5) whether he is satisfied with the current level of confidentiality with which the screening of donated blood for the AIDS virus is carried out.

Mr. Newton: There is no need at present to review the current programme for screening blood donations for HIV.

The safety of the blood supply in this country is maintained in two ways. First, all potential donors are given a leaflet which asks those who are at risk of AIDS not to donate blood. Secondly, all blood donations are tested for antibodies to HIV.

Initial tests are carried out in the laboratories of the regional transfusion centres and donations are only released for use when all the tests have been completed and found negative.

Where an initial test is positive, it is repeated by the RTC. Samples of repeatedly positive donations are sent to one of the reference laboratories of the Public Health Laboratory Service for confirmation. In the rare event of a confirmed positive test, the donor is informed by a doctor from the RTC and given counselling help.

A donor's test results and medical history are always kept in the strictest confidence.

Of nearly 3·5 million donations tested for antibodies to HIV since screening began, only a tiny number (·002 per cent.) have been found positive. The estimated cost of screening all blood donations for antibodies to HIV in 1986-87 is £2·75 million.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he has made any estimate of the total cost of introducing a national blood screening programme to identify carriers of the AIDS virus;

(2) what assessment he has made of the feasibility of introducing a national screening programme to identify carriers of the AIDS virus.

Mr. Newton: Testing for anti-bodies to AIDS virus is already available nationally on a voluntary basis. The Government are not persuaded that a national screening programme would be a sensible public health measure at the present time, and consequently no detailed assessment of the feasibility and costs have been undertaken.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what detailed laboratory evidence is available to his Department that the cell-free human immunodeficiency virus which gives rise to AIDS has been identified in human semen; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what detailed laboratory evidence is available to his Department suggesting that a number of cells which contain either AIDS-related viral RNA or pro-viral DNA have been isolated in semen; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether it remains the view of the Government's Chief Medical Officer that the AIDS virus is present in semen in very high concentrations; and if he will make a statement outlining the published laboratory data from which this conclusion was drawn.

Mr. Newton: There is no evidence to suggest that whether or not HIV in semen is cell-free or cell-associated is relevant to the transmission of infection from semen. Nor are the number of cells in semen containing AIDS-related viral RNA or pro-viral DNA known to be relevant. The quantification of HIV in semen is not an exact science, but the available epidemiological evidence confirms the views of experts worldwide that the virus is present in high enough concentrations in the semen of infected individuals so that transmission of infection can occur if this semen enters another person's rectum or vagina. I also refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 19 March at column *626* and to the references made available there.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement outlining the published data upon which the Government have based

their conclusions that prevention of semen transmission in sexual contact by use of a condom will lower the risk of AIDS transmission.

Mr. Newton: It is well established that the use of condoms protects substantially against sexually transmitted disease. The value of condoms in providing protection against HIV infection in particular was discussed in an editorial in the *British Medical Journal* on 15 November 1986 which quoted the literature available at that time. Further data was published in the *Journal of the Americanl Medical Association* in Vol. 257 p. 640-44 (1987) and in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in Vol. 316 p. 345 (1987).

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what research data are available to him about the alleged correlation between the widespread promotion of barrier contraceptives and the level of unprotected sexual activity among the young in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what account was taken in formulating the Government's AIDS advertising programme of the report in *British Medicine* about Swedish research into the correlation between the availability of contraceptives and the level of sexual activity, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

(3) what consideration was given in the formation of the policy underlying the Government's AIDS advertising programme to the statement of Dr. Judith Bury of the Brook Advisory Centres regarding the alleged correlation between the provision of contraceptives and the incidence of unprotected sexual intercourse.

Mr. Newton: We are not aware of any good evidence to suggest that the wider availability or promotion of condoms or other contraceptives leads to higher levels of unprotected sexual activity. Our own surveys amongst young people reveal a high level of understanding that reduction in the number of sexual partners can reduce the risk of catching the AIDS virus and that the use of condoms can also do so.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans any review of his anti-AIDS policy in the light of the views expressed by Dr. John Seale in the *British Medical Journal*, a copy of which has been sent to him, regarding the effectiveness of the Government's advertising and public education campaign as a contribution to the control of AIDS.

Mr. Newton: We have no such plans.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance the Chief Medical Officer at his Department has given on the professional position of doctors suffering from AIDS; what information he has as to the number of *(a)* general practitioners, *(b)* hospital doctors and *(c)* other doctors suffering from AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensioners (Food Allocations)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider an additional page in the state pension book to enable an entry to be made to register that the pensioner has received his or her allocation of free European Community butter, cheese, meat, and so on.

Mr. Major: It is desirable to restrict entries in state pension order books to those necessary for the operation of the pension payment system. Entries in order books by other bodies could lead to confusion and difficulty. For this reason, it would not be appropriate to include an additional page to record receipt of food from the current Economic Community distribution scheme. Moreover, release of stocks of butter etc. from the short-term assistance scheme will terminate on 31 March.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is planning any new initiatives to prevent solvent abuse, especially aimed at young abusers.

Mrs. Currie: No new central initiatives are planned by the Department although we shall continue to keep the need for such initiatives under review.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of doubling child benefit *(a)* if the increase was offset against all other child additions for which claimants drawing social security benefits were entitled, *(b)* if it was offset, additionally, where the increase was larger than any child addition entitlement, against any supplementary benefit entitlement, *(c)* if it was further offset against any entitlement to national insurance benefits and *(d)* if the increase was taxed (i) at the rate for higher rate taxpayers at their marginal rate of tax and (ii) at the standard rate where this was applicable.

Mr. Major: Based on benefit rates coming into effect in April 1987, the approximate cost, in Great Britain, would be as follows:

	£ million
(a)	3,850
(b)	3,600
(c)	3,500
(d) (i)	3,350
(d) (ii)	2,400

These figures assume the accumulative effect of the offset measures specified. In addition there would be very substantial administrative costs.

Severe Weather Payments

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision will be made under the income support scheme for claimants needing help in paying fuel bills in exceptionally severe weather.

Mr. Major: The exceptionally cold weather provision will be reviewed in the light of this winter's experience. It is too early to say what the outcome of that consideration will be.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings have resulted from the introductions of the selected list scheme of National Health Service drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Information from the Prescription Pricing Authority indicates that the Selected List Scheme saved £75 million on the drugs bill in 1985-86. The savings in each of the seven therapeutic groups was:

	£ million
Cough and Cold remedies	22
Analgesics for mild to moderate pain	19
Indigestion remedies	8
Vitamins	7½
Laxatives	2
Bitters and tonics	1
Benzodiazepine Sedatives and Tranquillisers	15½

As forecast, this initiative has thus released £75 million for the continuing growth in the National Health Service.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each waiting list return since 1 January 1974 the numbers of *(a)* urgent cases, *(b)* urgent cases waiting more than a month, *(c)* non-urgent cases, *(d)* non-urgent cases waiting more than a year and *(e)* the total number of urgent cases waiting.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. For information from September 1983 I refer the hon. Member to the hospital in-patient waiting list summary booklets, copies of which have been placed in the Library. Information, first collected centrally on statistical return SBH203 in September 1975, could be provided for earlier years only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will set out region by region, district health authority in-patient waiting lists, the total population living in each district, the percentage which the former represents of the latter and their national ranking by that percentage;

(2) if he will set out region by region, the hospital urgent in-patient waiting list in each district, together with the number of urgent cases waiting more than a month, the percentage the latter presents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage;

(3) if he will set out region by region, the hospital non-urgent in-patient waiting list in each health district together with the number of non-urgent cases waiting more than a year, the percentage the latter represents of the former and their national ranking by that percentage.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *317*, he will list in the *Official Report* those health authorities which have decided, or are considering whether, to use allocations from the waiting list funds for projects involving the private sector indicating *(a)* the specialties involved, *(b)* the cost and *(c)* the private sector participants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 March 1987, c. *625*]: The health authorities listed have decided, or are considering whether, to use resources from within their allocations from the waiting list fund for projects involving the private sector:

Region	*District*
Yorkshire	Scunthorpe
Trent	Sheffield Leicestershire Doncaster (three projects)
North West Thames	Hounslow and Spelthorne
North East Thames	Southend
South East Thames	Hastings Bromley Dartford and Gravesham Tunbridge Wells
Wessex	East Dorset Portsmouth
Oxford	Milton Keynes
Mersey	Crewe
North Western	Blackburn Barnsley (two projects) Bolton Stockport Bury

Details of contracts are in some cases still to be finalised but on current plans these projects provide for the treatment of nearly 2,900 waiting list cases at a cost of £1·57 million. The specialties involved are ear, nose and throat, orthopaedics (mostly hip replacements), gynaecology, general surgery, urology and ophthalmology.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the numbers of operations of each kind that he expects to be achieved in each district health authority as a result of the allocation of the extra £25 million to reduce the waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. I have today placed in the Library full details of the schemes planned by Regional Health Authorities for the improvement of waiting lists and times in their districts supported from the waiting list fund of £25 million for 1987-88.

Hospital Car Service

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether drivers in the hospital car service are reimbursed for using their cars at the same rate as administrative staff of the National Health Service who use their own cars on official business.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities are free to reimburse drivers in the hospital car service either at rates agreed by the General Whitley Council for NHS staff or at a rate determined in the light of local circumstances.

Medical Staff

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of consultant medical staff per unit in each regional health authority in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Diet Costs

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement regarding the calculation of the additional expense of whole diet costs in "S Manual" clause 4736 from 1980 onwards, indicating from what data base within the 1979 "Family Expenditure Survey" the indications on average expenditure on food for different age groups used in the calculations was derived.

Mr. Major: These figures are provided by the Chief Adjudication Officer as part of his guidance to the independent adjudication officers. I understand that the original figure of £9 quoted in 1981 as the average expenditure on food for an adult was derived from unpublished data from the 1979 "Family Expenditure Survey" in respect of single pensioners, married couple pensioners and single adults under 65 in the lowest 20 per cent. household income bracket. The figures in respect of children were based on a percentage of the relevant scale rates similar to that for adults. The figures have been increased in subsequent guidance in line with the food element of the retail prices index. They were last increased in November 1985 and will be increased again next month to coincide with the general uprating of benefits.

Hackney Hospital (Psychiatric Wards)

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on conditions in psychiatric wards in Hackney hospital in the light of the report of the City and Hackney community health council;

(2) if he will hold discussions with the City and Hackney district health authority about conditions in psychiatric wards in Hackney hospital;

(3) if he will set up an inquiry into conditions in psychiatric wards in Hackney hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I have seen a copy of a newsletter produced by Hackney community health council, which reported a number of allegations about conditions in psychiatric wards in Hackney hospital. Such allegations are matters for City and Hackney health authority to investigate in the first instance and take any action if appropriate.

Attendance Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what categories of disabled people his counsel informed the Court of Appeal might be able to claim attendance allowance as a result of the judgment of the court in the Moran case.

Mr. Major: In his address to the Court of Appeal following delivery of the judgment in the Moran case, counsel for the Secretary of State indicated that the judgment could affect the attendance allowance entitlement of people who suffer from epilepsy, diabetes, haemophilia, heart attacks and angina, or multi-sensory handicaps; elderly people who suffer attacks of confusion; and children who are mentally handicapped or hyperactive, or who suffer from asthma or cystic fibrosis.

How the judgment might be applied is a matter for the independent Attendance Allowance Board, taking account of the references in the judgment to the importance of the facts of the individual case. We shall be considering our response to the judgment in the light of advice from the Board.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to ensure that disabled people who may be entitled to attendance allowance or to the higher rate of attendance allowance in the light of the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the Moran case receive the allowance to which they are entitled, and that arrears are paid in respect of any underpayment resulting from the interpretation of the law prior to that judgment.

Mr. Major: The application of the judgment is a matter for the independent Attandance Allowance Board who will be issuing guidelines to delegated medical practitioners. We are considering the questions which the hon. Member raises.

Wistons Nursing Home, Brighton

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many occasions during the last 12 months officials of his Department have visited Wistons nursing home, Dyke Road, Brighton, Sussex, in order to monitor the implementation of the Abortion Act and the Infant Life (Preservation) Act.

Mr. Newton: Wistons nursing home has received two visits of inspection under the Abortion Act during the past 12 months.

Childline

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make it his policy to consult the charity Childline to assess the extent to which the demand for help for children who have been sexually abused exceeds the supply in terms of both of the amount and the nature of the help;

(2) what financial support has so far been given to the charity Childline by his Department; and what assurances of support he has given for the future.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 30 October 1986 that £50,000 was being made available to help launch Childline; no undertakings have been given for the future, since no further grant application has been received. An official of the Department is an observer on the council set up by Childline to advise the project and a close link is maintained with the organisation.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of administering the system of exemptions from prescription charges.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information required to make a reliable estimate is not available.

Nurses

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider increasing the availability of courses for mothers returning to nursing; if he will further consider what measures he can take to encourage mothers to return to nursing before their children are of school age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to match the provision of courses for mothers returning to nursing with the need. Every encouragement is given to authorities to attract qualified nurses to return, but whether mothers with children under school age should be sought particularly is a matter for each authority to decide.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied that sufficient consideration is given to advances in technology and patient care in back-to-nursing courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to ensure that the content of such courses is appropriate to the needs of the participants, and we would expect them to recognise the importance of advances in technology and patient care.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration has been given to operating a flexible working hours system in the Health Service, enabling nurses with children to work during school hours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities already offer opportunities to nursing staff who are unable to work full time. Some 34 per cent. of such staff are employed on a part-time basis. We agree that there my be scope for employing more part-time staff and last June the Acting Chairman of the National Health Service Management Board wrote to Regional General Managers asking them to consider giving more opportunities to part-time working and job sharing. There are however limitations on the extent to which professional jobs can be broken into part-time components and the numbers of staff who can be employed only during school holidays.

Income Support

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the identification of an element equal to a person's rates payment within income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We have received a number of representations on the effect on income support recipients of the proposal that people should pay a proportion of their general rates. Final decisions about the level of income support have not yet been taken.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is in a position to make a statement about the nature of rate assessment forms for people on income support.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with local authority associations concerning the calculation of net income of people on income support; to what effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The housing benefit standing committee, which consists of representatives of the local authority associations and officials of the Department meets regularly. The committee commissioned a sub-group of its members to examine approaches to the calculation of net income for people receiving housing benefit under the reformed scheme. The sub-group met five times and produced a report setting out options for the treatment of net income. Draft regulations for the reformed scheme taking into account the majority preference for an actual net income approach, were issued to the local authority associations for formal consultation at the beginning of the year. The associations' responses are being considered at present.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received from local authorities seeking 100 per cent. assistance with rates for those who will receive income support, where the authorities meet spending targets set by the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I am not aware of any representations specifically making this point. People whose local authorities keep spending down will benefit from having

to make a lower contribution towards rates. An arrangement such as that set out in my hon. Friend's question would not be in keeping with our objectives of greater accountability of local authorities to their electorates, equity between people on and off income support or living in different parts of the country, and operational simplicity.

Irradiated Food

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Government will be announcing their decision on food irradiation following the report from the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 12 January at column *120*. We are still awaiting the further advice of the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods.

Hospitals (Accommodation Sales)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of units of accommodation attached to hospitals that have been sold by each district health authority over the last two years, and the price obtained in each case.

Mrs. Currie: The Department collects information about sales of residential accommodation only by region. Sales in 1985-86 are set out in the following table. Comparable figures for 1986-87 should be available in May.

Region	*Number of Residential Units sold*	*Total proceeds* £
Northern	67	1,039,000
Yorkshire	49	844,465
Trent	263	2,660,641
East Anglian	59	1,348,083
North West Thames	14	793,140
North East Thames	134	2,213,200
South East Thames	207	5,900,010
South West Thames	186	5,519,240
Wessex	37	1,174,469
Oxford	35	1,560,539
South Western	61	1,420,696
West Midlands	111	1,953,743
Mersey	120	1,140,808
North Western	50	1,290,616
SHAs	Nil	Nil
ENGLAND	1,393	28,858,650

Local Offices (Claims)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the back-log of claims at the Apollo house office of his Department in Coventry in January 1986, July 1986 and January 1987, respectively.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Hospital and Community Services)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will answer the question on National Health Service hospital and community services from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to which the Minister for Health, the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), gave a holding reply on 27 February, *Official Report*, column *449*.

Mr. Newton: The information requested in the hon. Member's earlier question is not readily available and is taking some time to compile. Work is in progress and I shall let the hon. Member have as full a reply as is possible as soon as I can.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has plans to encourage all health care staff to be vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Mr. Newton: We are considering the advice to be issued to health authorities on the vaccination of their staff against hepatitis.

Blood Sugar Test Strips

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet decided whether to make blood sugar test strips available on prescription; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Blood testing strips will not be made available on general practitioner prescription at present, although that is something we would like to do in due course.

Blood Products

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the date when his Department gave instructions that all Factor VIII blood products should be heat treated.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers in Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy district social security offices who have received exceptionally severe weather allowances in the current year.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *667*]: Up to 10 March 1987, the latest date for which information is available, the Department's local office in Dunfermline had made 1,913 exceptionally cold weather £5 payments, and the Kirkcaldy office had made 2,929.

National Insurance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate (i) the revenue effect to the National Insurance Fund of abolition of the upper earnings limit and (ii) the loss to the fund of counting personal allowances for income tax purposes against the employee's liability to contributions.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 March 1987, c. *294-95*]: If the upper earnings limit for employees' class 1

contributions were removed, but retained for the contracted out rebate, then the National Insurance Fund's income from National Insurance contributions would have been £690 million higher in 1986-87.

If all personal tax allowances, including the married man's allowance, counted against the employee's liability for National Insurance contributions, then the National Insurance Fund's contribution income would have been about £3·75 billion lower in 1986-87.

Nuclear Installations (Cancer)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he can yet give a firm date for the publication by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys of the statistical study of cancer incidence and mortality in the vicinity of nuclear installations in England and Wales.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1987, c. *724*]: The report "Cancer Incidence and Mortality in the Vicinity of Nuclear Installations England and Wales, 1959-80" was published earlier today in its final form including microfiche tables. Copies are available in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 24 March 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General whether there will be any increase in the time taken to process legal aid applications in civil cases as a result of the shortfall of £1·4 million in the sum requested (£27·248 million) to run the legal aid administration in the year 1987-88.

The Attorney-General: The amount allocated for legal aid administration in 1987-88 is £25·465 million. This is 3·4 per cent. higher than the figure for 1986-87 (£24·634 million) which in turn was 18·6 per cent. higher than the figure for 1985-86 (£20·767 million). The legal aid administration of the Law Society estimates that the length of time taken to process civil legal aid applications will increase during 1987-88. The Government are confident that the legal aid administration will do all it can to keep any such increase to the minimum.

Social Security Commissioners

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General what is the number of social security commissioners and the respective populations served for each of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; if he has any proposals to increase the number of social security commissioners for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: There are 17 commissioners (including two part-time) in Great Britain. For the purpose of this jurisdiction there are no formal divisions between England, Wales and Scotland. At present, however, two commissioners are located in Edinburgh. Commissioners also attend regularly at Cardiff to conduct oral hearings. Steps are being taken to appoint an additional commissioner, to be based in Edinburgh. I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that there are three commissioners there, but this jurisdiction is separate from that of Great Britain. Latest approximate population figures are:

	million
Wales	2·8
Scotland	5·1
Northern Ireland	1·6

WALES

Research and Development

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to increase research and development in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Most of the research carried out in Wales is funded by research councils, other Government Departments and the private sector. My Department actively encourages the take-up of the funds available and in particular I have established WINTECH, the technology arm of the Welsh Development Agency, to further stimulate industrially orientated research and development.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will report on the steps taken by his Department and the Welsh Development Agency toward implementing the recommendations of the following reports concerning the industrial investment activity of the Welsh Development Agency: Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, 1985; Welsh Office/Treasury Review, 1987; Public Accounts Committee 7th Report 1986-87.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Progress towards implementing the recommendations made in the 1985 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the investment activities of the development agencies is described in the Thirty-Eight report from the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 1984-85, published on 28 October 1985, and in the associated Treasury Minute of February 1986 (Cmnd. 9743).

A number of the recommendations in the Welsh Office/Treasury 1986 review were anticipated by the agency and incorporated into its planning, appraisal and monitoring system. I have discussed the review with the agency's board, and work on an action plan is well in hand.

The Government's response to the Public Accounts Committee's Seventh Report 1986-87 will be made in due course.

Welsh Venture Capital

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been invested by the Welsh Venture Capital fund since its establishment by the Welsh Development Agency in 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Since 1985 Welsh Venture Capital has invested or committed £2,665,000.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the number of hospital beds in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: While it is not disputed that there has been a reduction in the number of hospital beds in Wales, what I cannot agree with are attempts to use bed numbers by themselves as an indicator of the level of health care. Successive Governments have pursued a policy of replacing large numbers of old-fashioned hospitals with new more efficient ones with the potential to provide a higher level of patient care. In this context between 1974 and 1979 there was a decrease of 1,251 beds available in the NHS in Wales. Since 1979, some £490 million has been invested in the capital estate of the hospital and community health service in Wales, and five major hospital developments have been completed in this period, a sixth has been commissioned and there have been many other capital developments in existing hospitals, as well as the building of two new community hospitals. The

revenue resources made available to health authorities in Wales have increased by 33 per cent., after allowing for inflation, between 1978-79 and 1987-88.

A decline in bed numbers can actually represent an improvement in levels of care, as in the case of the fall of 996 in the number of mental illness and handicap beds between 1979 and 1985, which is in line with the Government's policy of returning such patients to more appropriate care in the community. Care in the community is also relevant to the acute hospital sector, and developments allowing increased treatment and care at home have contributed to the increase of 76,000 or 22 per cent. in the number of in-patient cases between 1979 and 1985. This additional health care has been supported by the increase of 13·5 per cent. in the numbers of hospital staff directly concerned with patient care between 1979 and 1986.

Chest Consultants

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the number of chest consultants in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: As far as thoracic medicine is concerned, changes in the pattern of chest disease and in clinical practice have led to new methods of dealing with chest disorders, including tuberculosis. The treatment of chest disorders is not the province of one specialty alone. Consultants in general medicine, cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology and geriatrics are now also involved. The numbers of consultants in these specialties has increased markedly since 1979. For example, the number in general medicine has increased by 34 per cent. in total (from 56 to 75 posts), and by 20 per cent. in whole-time equivalents (from nearly 53 to above 63).

On matters of this kind, my Department is advised by the Welsh Medical and Dental Manpower Committee, composed of leading members of the medical profession in the Principality. If an authority wished to make any case to increase the number of consultants in thoracic medicine, then the committee would consider it and advise the Department accordingly. The fact that there have been no such bids recently indicates that these needs are properly catered for. The emphasis placed recently on the numbers of chest consultants remaining in Wales takes absolutely no account of the changes in medical practice that have taken place in the last 10 years under successive Governments whereby chest diseases are now treated by consultants with an interest in a range of specialties, which may include thoracic medicine. It should be remembered that this is not a new approach and follows from changes both in the pattern of lung disorders and in treatment. As a result the need for specialised chest consultants is much less than it was 10 years ago.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Local Government Elections

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider introducing legislation to ensure that annual elections to local authorities are held in those local authorities currently elected en bloc every three or four years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no present plans for such legislation. We are considering a recommendation by the Widdicombe committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business that all councillors in England and Wales should be elected every four years by whole-council elections based on single-member electoral areas.

Haverigg Prison

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has plans to enable category C prisoners at Her Majesty's prison, Haverigg, to receive fortnightly visits;

(2) what criteria were used in deciding that category C prisoners at Her Majesty's prison, Haverigg are allowed only one visit per month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Meller: The frequency of visits to convicted prisoners above the minimum of one visit (of at least half an hour) every four weeks is a matter for the discretion of governors, who are, however, encouraged to permit visits as frequently as circumstances at their establishments allow. At Her Majesty's prison, Haverigg the visits may last up to two hours and additional visits above the minimum are permitted in exceptional circumstances, but fortnightly visits are not practicable.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to increase the number of letters per week which category C prisoners at Her Majesty's prison, Haverigg are allowed to write; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Meller: Under present arrangements inmates at Her Majesty's prison, Haverigg are allowed to send one letter per week at public expense and two letters per week paid for from prison earnings.

Last April the censorship of letters to and from inmates in open establishments was reduced and the restriction on the number of letters which they could send and receive were removed. In the light of experience of these changes we shall be considering in due course how far changes of this kind might be made in category C establishments.

Radioactivity (Contingency Plans)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the circulars which offer guidance to local authorities who seek to develop contingency plans to mitigate the effects of radioactivity released into the atmosphere from incidents involving the transportation of radioactive weapons materials.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: General advice on accidents involving radioactivity is contained in the "Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities", a copy of which is in the Library.

Electrical Fires

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fires were caused by wiring defects in England and Wales in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the approximate cost of the damage.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1984 local authority fire brigades in England and Wales attended 15,949 fires for which electrical wiring was recorded by the brigade as the source of ignition. Of these, 2,845 vehicles and 1,083 in other outdoor locations (excluding more minor outdoor fires, on

which brigades do not report information on the cause). These figures for England and Wales correspond to those for the United Kingdom published in tables 34 and 58 of "Fire Statistics United Kingdom, 1984". Information on the financial cost of these fires is not available.

NATO (Committees)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the terms of reference for each working group of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Civil Defence Committee; what is the post, rank, and responsibilities of each representative of the United Kingdom on the working group of the Civil Defence Committee; and who attends which working groups.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Civil Defence Committee has a working group which prepares for meetings of the Civil Defence Committee and may discuss any matters relevant to that committee. United Kingdom representation is from F6 (Emergency Planning) Division of the Home Office at grade 5 or 7. It also has two sub-groups of experts which provide more specialised fora for consideration of medical and warning and monitoring matters. The United Kingdom representatives are a senior medical officer in the Department of Health and Social Security and the director of the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (grade 6) respectively.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply of 12 January, *Official Report*, column 67, why the minutes of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Civil Defence Committee carry a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation security classification; how many North Atlantic Treaty Organisation security classifications there are; if he will list them; and if he will explain the criteria applied by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation when deciding to place civil defence information under a security classification.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation uses four security classifications: restricted, confidential, secret and top secret. The unauthorised disclosure of information in these categories would be increasingly damaging to the Alliance. There are no distinct criteria applicable only to civil defence information.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the title and duties of the senior employee of British Telecommunications plc who sits on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Civil Communications Planning Committee; what meetings, in addition to the annual plenary session, are held by the Civil Communications Planning Committee; and where these meetings take place.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Kingdom representation at the Civil Communications Planning Committee is provided by an official at grade 7 from the Home Office directorate of telecommunications. He is supported by a senior member of staff from the Government services division of British Telecom International as occasion demands.

In addition to two plenary sessions of the Committee held annually, working groups of the committee have been meeting up to a total of nine times each year. Meetings are normally held at NATO headquarters in Brussels, but may be held in other locations at the invitation of member states of the Alliance.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make the minutes of the plenary sessions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Civil Communications Planning Committee available in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The minutes of the Civil Communications Planning Committee carry a NATO security classification.

Radioactivity (Fire Service Guidance)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the reply of 15 January, *Official Report*, column 253, when the last review of the June 1984 "Guidance to Fire Service at Incidents Involving Radioactivity" was conducted; if any other specific guidance is issued to chief fire officers in the handling of incidents involving radioactivity arising from the transportation of radioactive weapons' materials; and if any guidance is issued to chief fire officers regarding the procedure for advance notification of the timings and routes of radioactive weapons' materials convoys to specific chief fire officers whose administrative areas are to be passed through.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The guidance on the role of the fire service at incidents involving radioactivity is about to be reviewed. As I indicated in my answer of 15 January, it is the policy of this Government, as it has been of their predecessors, not to comment in detail on the transportation of radioactive weapons materials. There is continuing liaison between representatives of chief fire officers and Ministry of Defence staff about the role of the fire service in the handling of incidents involving radioactive materials.

Radioactivity (Emergency Service Officials)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the senior civil emergency service officials who are briefed on a classified basis on contingency plans at incidents involving radioactive materials.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I do not know to which contingency plans the question refers. The dissemination of any classified information is on a need to know basis and is not determined by rank.

IBA (Advertisements)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to direct the Independent Broadcasting Authority to accept advertisements from any publication registered as a newspaper by the General Post Office and accepted as such for the Royal Mail.

Mr. Meller: No. It is for the IBA to decide whether particular advertisements are acceptable for broadcasting in the light of its statutory obligations.

Crime Statistics

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many

people with disabilities were the victims of crime against *(a)* the person and *(b)* property, in the London borough of Southwark during 1986.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available.

Prison Officers' Houses, Culcheth

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Warrington, North can expect to receive the information about empty prison officer accommodation at Culcheth which was promised in the answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *155*, and 9 March, *Official Report*, column *28*.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested was included in my letter of 17 March, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Bail

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend the Bail Act 1976 to provide that bail shall not be granted to any person charged with murder; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Bail Act 1976 establishes a general presumption in favour of bail. The nature and seriousness of the offence are among the matters to which a court must have regard when considering whether any of the exceptions specified in the Act to that general presumption apply. We are looking at the events which led, in a recent case, to the grant of bail to Winston Silcott. We will consider whether there are lessons to be learnt and report any conclusions to the House.

Kidnap Insurance

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce proposals for legislation to control and regulate the availability of kidnap insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Durham Prison

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many category A women prisoners there were in Her Majesty's prison, Durham; and how many strip searches were made on category A prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Durham, in February 1987, indicating *(a)* strip searches before and after consultation with legal advisers, *(b)* after visits and *(c)* after cell change, wing search and cell search.

Mr. Mellor: During February there were four category A women prisoners in Durham prison. Strip searches were carried out on women prisoners in this category in the circumstances and on the number of occasions shown:

	Number
After legal visits	Nil
After other visits	5
At the time of cell changes; during wing searches and cell searches	9
TOTAL	14

Shops Act (Prosecutions)

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prosecutions there have been since May 1986 against small, local retailers;

(2) how many prosecutions for contravention of the Shops Act have been made since May 1986.

Mr. Waddington: Information, other than age and sex, is not collected centrally on the characteristics of the defendant in court proceedings; nor is information yet available on the number of court proceedings in 1986.

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek to remove the onus for prosecutions for contravention of the Shops Act from local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have no plans to do so.

TRANSPORT

Toxic Substances

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the carriage of toxic substances by publicly owned or publicly subsidised ships; if the same provisions apply throughout the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our policy is that all United Kingdom registered merchant ships in normal commercial services must comply with the relevant provisions contained in the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations when carrying toxic substances.

No distinction is made in this safety policy, as between publicly owned, publicly subsidised or privately owned ships.

Coaches

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to *(a)* the number of new express coach services which became available, *(b)* the level of fares and *(c)* the volume of passengers before and after the Transport Act 1980.

Mr. David Mitchell: By 1982 the number of regular long distance coach services had increased by some 16 per cent. and fares had been reduced by up to 40 per cent. in real terms. It was estimated that the number of passengers had increased from 15 million a year to 18 million a year.

Commuter Rail Services

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss the quality of commuter services at his next meeting with the chairman of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: The objectives we set for Sir Robert Reid last October emphasised the need to improve its performance so as to achieve the agreed standards for quality of service. Quality is of prime importance to the commuter, and I have asked the board to report to me every quarter on its performance.

NATO (Planning Board for Ocean Shipping)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 13 February, *Official Report*, columns *554-55*, what information he has about

the posts held by the two non-governmental officials who represent the United Kingdom on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation planning board for ocean shipping; who shares joint chairmanship of the planning board for ocean shipping with his Department's director of shipping policy; and what meetings, in addition to the annual plenary session, are held by the planning board for ocean shipping and where these take place.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A senior official of the United States Government is joint chairman of the board. The non-governmental United Kingdom representatives provide technical and specialist expertise to the board and its sub-groups. In addition to the annual plenary sessions of the board held in London and Washington, sub-groups hold meetings in various locations within the member countries of the Alliance.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make the minutes of the annual plenary session of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's planning board for ocean shipping available in the Library.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The minutes of the board are treated in confidence, in consistency with the minutes of other NATO planning boards and committees.

East Sussex

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the level of investment by Her Majesty's Government on the road infrastructure in East Sussex.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There has been increasing investment in roads in East Sussex since 1979. Actual and planned expenditure on trunk roads amounts to more than £100 million at 1983 prices. In addition, transport supplementary grants amounting to £4½ million have been awarded to the county council in the past four years, with nearly another £1 million available for the next financial year.

Helicopter Research

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what funds he makes available for helicopter research; and what will be the proposed expenditure in 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is undertaking a three-year programme of research into helicopter safety costing £1·6 million and based upon recommendations made by the helicopter airworthiness requirements panel. It is the Government's policy that the civil aviation industry should normally meet the costs of research. But, exceptionally, my Department is contributing £400,000 towards the cost of this programme, including £165,000 in 1987-88. The Department of Energy, the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association and the CAA are also contributing.

A3 (Safety)

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further interim measures he proposes to improve safety and reduce traffic speeding on the Guildford to Milford section of the A3 trunk road during the current phase of upgrading to dual carriageway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Construction of the Compton to Shackleford improvement is planned to start later this year.

We are investigating the possibility of interim safety measures as suggested by my right hon. Friend. I shall write to him as soon as I can.

Cash Limits

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to the cash limits on his Votes.

Mr. Moore: As foreshadowed in my statement on 9 March, at column 22, on the Zeebrugge ferry disaster, the Government have made a £1,000,000 (£1 million) contribution to the disaster fund, met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

The contribution will add £1,000,000 to Government expenditure, but as savings have occurred in Class VIII, Vote 2, the public expenditure planning total will not itself be affected. The cash limit for Class VIII, Vote 2, in 1986-87 is being reduced from £181,371,000 to £180,371,000.

Parliament will be asked to vote a summer Supplementary Estimate to repay the advance to the Contingencies Fund in 1987-88. As an internal Government financial transfer, this will not affect the planning total of public expenditure in 1987-88. It will, however, be necessary to increase the cash limit for Class VIII, Vote 2, in that year from £190,446,000 to £191,446,000.

Bridges

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the report on the state of bridges in relation to the new bridge assessment code.

Mr. Moore: I am publishing today the report on a sample survey of bridges on local authority roads. A copy has been placed in the Library. I am grateful for the co-operation of all the major public bridge owners and for their help in producing this useful report; I shall now be seeking their comments on the findings.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General whether he will state for *(a)* Manchester and *(b)* the United Kingdom the number and percentage of (i) men and (ii) women who have been deemed unavailable for work; and of these, how many decisions were based upon the person having child care responsibilities.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: some claimants have always been disallowed benefit by independent statutory adjudicating authorities in accordance with long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments because they were not available for work. If the hon. Member is asking how many claims have been disallowed in this way since we introduced modified procedures to enforce the rules, the answer as on 27 February 1987 was 72 in the Manchester city council area and 8,866 nationally.

These disallowances represent 0·5 per cent. of all those completing the modified availability form in the

Manchester area and 1·1 per cent. nationally. Our records do not separately distinguish between the sexes or those with child care responsibilities.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Strang asked the Paymaster General what are his latest estimates of the current size of the work force in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In December 1986 (the latest quarter for which figures are available) there were 5,367,000 employees in employment and self-employed people in the manufacturing industries in Great Britain.

Inflation

Mr. Adley asked the Paymaster General what assessment his Department has made of the effect of inflation on employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Inflation damages the prospects for growth and destroys jobs. The firm financial framework established by this Government has reduced inflation, encouraged growth and led to the generation of over 1 million extra new jobs in this country since spring 1983.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the median earnings in each case illustrated in the charts at 5.4 of the latest issue of *Social Trends*.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is shown in the table:

Median of average gross weekly earnings GB April 1985
Full-time employees on adult rates, whose pay was not affected by absence

	Males £	*Females* £
Industry		
Manufacture of motor vehicles and parts thereof	182·8	122·2
Textiles	143·8	92·3
Retail distribution	134·3	87·6
Banking & Finance	221·3	133·9
Education	201·6	164·2

Source:—New Earnings Survey.

Adult Training

Mr. Thurnham asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the estimated expenditure on adult training at skillcentres by Manchester, north area of the Manpower Services Commission's vocational educational and training group during 1986-87 was authorised following competitive tenders or quotations from other providers of training.

Mr. Lee: None.

All the 1986-87 expenditure on adult training courses in skillcentres in the Manchester, north area of the Manpower Services Commission's vocational educational and training group was authorised following direct discussions between the VETG area manager and the staff in the skills training agency.

Highlands Estate, Hanwell

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received concerning the effects on the health of the residents of the Highlands Estate, Hanwell, W.7, of the discontinuation of the removal of asbestos from their homes by Ealing council; if the Health and Safety Executive proposes to take any action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have not received any representations concerning the health of the residents of flats at Highlands Estate, Hanwell, W.7. Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive have visited the flats and formed the opinion that the temporary cessation of the work does not pose a risk from asbestos to the health of the residents.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will indicate the amount of uranium required to fuel a nuclear power station of 2,000 MW for 20 years, and the volume of spoil associated with the uranium refining in this country;

(2) if he will indicate the reserves of uranium available to the United Kingdom in terms of years if used in *(a)* thermonuclear power stations and *(b)* fast-breeder reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the CEGB that, on the basis of average figures for PWRs worldwide and excluding initial cores, 2000 MW of PWR nuclear capacity operating over a 20 year period would require some 6,000 tonnes of natural uranium.

Uranium is imported for use in the United Kingdom either in the form of uranium ore concentrate or as uranium hexafluoride. Chapter 106.24 of the Sizewell report says that about 1 tonne of solid tailings, and up to 5,000 litres of liquid waste, results from the production of 1 to 2 kg of uranium ore concentrate.

Based on the latest OECD/IAEA estimates, low-cost uranium resources are adequate to meet demand well into the next century. Fast reactors can utilise uranium at least 50 times more effectively than thermal reactors.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the expenditure of public money on the promoting of nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received many representations about the importance of informing the public of the facts about the safety of nuclear power and its economic and strategic benefits.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further initiatives he proposes to take to promote energy efficiency.

Mr. David Hunt: I outlined a programme of 14 energy efficiency initiatives in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) on 26 January, at columns 52-53. These are being pursued with the relevant

industries and professions to build upon the success of Energy Efficiency Year and to achieve further progress with the programmes and schemes of the Energy Efficiency Office.

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has set objectives for the new chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have settled objectives with the UKAEA chairman, Mr. John Collier, on the following terms.

General

Now that the authority has become a trading fund following the enactment of the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1986, you should ensure that it operates on a fully commercial basis while discharging its continuing responsibilities to me and to Parliament.

The authority's principal business remains to carry out research and development on the application of nuclear energy for civil purposes in the United Kingdom. The authority will also undertake other functions agreed with the Government consistent with the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1954, the Science and Technology Act 1965, the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1986, and any other relevant legislation; one such function will be to distribute information on nuclear power. Within these limits I expect you to seek out new customers in both the nuclear and non-nuclear fields so as to exploit the authority's assets and expertise to the full. You should ensure the authority's organisation is appropriate for achieving these tasks.

Subject to the acknowledged need for the authority to carry out a modest programme of longer-term underlying research, defined customer-contractor relationships should apply as far as possible to all the authority's work, including that undertaken for the Department of Energy. All work for customers whether nuclear or non-nuclear should be undertaken only on the basis of an adequate return. The authority's charges to customers may include a contribution towards its underlying research programme.

You should continue to take all reasonable steps to foster the exploitation by United Kingdom industry of technology developed by the authority, including joint ventures where possible.

Nuclear Work for the Department of Energy

To meet the Department's requirements for R and D in the nuclear field you will be asked, each year, to put forward, for agreement with the Department, a programme letter for each area of its declared interest. These should include specific objectives and programmes of work, resources required, timescales and priorities. These programme letters will provide the basis for the Department's funding.

You should ensure that the authoity has in place mechanisms for verifying the quality of the work carried out under the programme letters, and for maximising the efficiency with which that work is executed. You should also ensure that the authority reviews regularly the scope of the work being undertaken or proposed to meet programme letter objectives, with a view to ensuring that the work programmes are the most economical way of meeting those objectives.

You should on behalf of the authority, and within the above framework, continue to provide me with advice and information on matters connected with nuclear energy, in the United Kingdom and abroad, on the authority's work, and on any other areas of authority expertise. I shall in particular continue to place the highest value upon the authority's independent expertise in questions connected with nuclear safety.

Safety

You should ensure that the authority continues to have arrangements which secure the highest standards of safety at all times both in its day-to-day activities and in the management of radioactive waste. You should continue to be guided by the Secretary of State's direction of 1 April 1960, the sense of which (allowing for subsequent changes in responsibilities) is that the authority should have regard as far as practicable to any current safety requirements ordinarily imposed by the NII on licensed operators.

Financial

I expect you to use your best endeavours to ensure that the authority lives within its EFL as from time to time agreed.

I expect you to use your best endeavours to ensure that the financial target, as set by me from time to time after discussion with the authority is achieved. (The agreed target for the three financial years 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1989 is a return, averaged across the period, 5 per cent. a year in the form of a current cost operating surplus expressed as a percentage of average current cost capital employed). I also expect to require you to surrender distributions of agreed sums from time to time to the Consolidated Fund.

You should provide the Department annually with a medium-term corporate plan covering the PES period and taking account as appropriate of the likely development of each of the main business areas over the next 10 years. The plan should include a capital investment memorandum setting out the authority's capital expenditure proposals. The overall plan should be formulated within the framework of longer-term organisational aims and objectives as determined by strategic reviews carried out by the authority and as indicated in this letter.

Efficiency

You should ensure that the authority attaches particular importance to the control of costs, increasing efficiency and the economical use of resources including private sector resources where appropriate. You should continue to investigate in liaison with the Department the development of suitable performance aims complementary to the financial target.

PRIME MINISTER

Private Offices (Information)

Q. 129 **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what instructions are given to the private offices of Government Ministers in relation to reporting to Ministers information given to them by police forces.

The Prime Minister: None.

Bain and Company

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Prime Minister what was the purpose of her recent lunch with Sir Jack Lyons and Bain and Company; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The purpose of the lunch which I attended at Bain and Company on 7 January was to discuss the economy. It was attended by more than 40 people, most of whom were neither directors nor employees of Bain.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Prime Minister if she will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to the Cabinet Office who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

The Prime Minister: Surveys of the ethnic origin of staff in post and new entrants to the Civil Service have been carried out in agreement with the Council of Civil Service Unions on the basis of voluntary self-classification. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system. However, the Civil Service and the Council of Civil Service Unions are keen to improve the data base and are discussing practical ways in which this can be done.

Information on response rates in the existing new entrant surveys is not readily available. For example, new

entrants to the Cabinet Office include both recruits to the service and those joining on loan from other Government Departments. The number for whom ethnic origin data is not currently held should fall as data are transferred from parent Departments. Service-wide response rates to staff-in-post surveys have averaged 70 per cent. Applicant surveys have had higher response rates of 80 to 95 per cent. Departments will shortly start a comprehensive programme of applicant monitoring and this should help to improve the new entrant data base.

All the arrangements for ethnic origin monitoring are kept under review jointly by the Management and Personnel Office, Departments and the Council of Civil Service Unions. The objective is to increase the effectiveness of the implemenation of equal opportunity policy.

The results of the surveys will be published. Reports on the first phase of recruitment monitoring and the London and south-east and East Anglia staff-in-post surveys will be published later this year.

Engagements

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 March.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 March.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 March.

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 March.

Mr. Duffy asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 March.

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 24 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I was also present at Victoria to mark the arrival of King Fahd. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be attending a state banquet in honour of King Fahd.

Ministers (Correspondence)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister what has been the average number of letters received by all Ministers each year since 1979 from right hon. and hon. Members.

The Prime Minister: Information in the form requested is not available and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Licensing Hours

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has collected, since the relaxation of licensing hours in Scotland, about the number of extensions granted for different times of day.

Mr. Lang: The central collection of liquor licensing statistics ceased in 1981; before then the only figures collected related to the numbers and types of licences issued, not to regular or occasional extensions.

Woodilee Hospital

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when patients at Woodilee hospital were transferred to temporary accommodation as a result of structural defects; where they are currently being cared for; what plans he has for the construction of suitable short-term temporary accommodation; when he expects the existing buildings at Woodilee to be fit for re-occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Following the recommendation of a consultant structural engineer on Friday 13 March that the safety of the patients accommodated in the main block of Woodilee hospital was at risk, all the patients in that block were transferred over the following two days to alternative temporary accommodation at Woodilee hospital itself and at Stoneyetts, Gartloch, Stobhill, Leverndale, Ruchill and Mearnskirk hospitals. Since then, some of the patients at Mearnskirk have been transferred to the David Elder infirmary; further transfers may be made if other more suitable accommodation can be brought into use.

The consultant engineer is currently engaged on a further more detailed survey of the main block at Woodilee. Once his full report and supplementary building advice is available the greater Glasgow health board will be considering, in consultation with the Scottish Home and Health Department, whether the main block can and should be brought back into use and alternative options.

My right hon. and learned Friend is concerned that this situation has arisen but commends the speed with which the health board acted in response to the structural engineer's advice.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Shorter-Range Nuclear Forces

53. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest developments in negotiations on shorter-range nuclear forces in Europe.

55. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had about the possibility of including short-range intermediate nuclear forces in any imminent treaty.

Mr. Eggar: There are currently no separate negotiations betwen the United States and Soviet Union on shorter-range systems. It has been, however, part of NATO's position for many years that within an agreement on longer-range intermediate nuclear forces there should be constraints on those short-range systems which could circumvent such an agreement and a United States right to match. NATO has also agreed that the overall imbalance in shorter range systems must be addressed in follow-on negotiations.

ABM Treaty

54. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his assessment of the implications for United Kingdom policy on defence of United States policy towards the interpretation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Eggar: United States policy on the interpretation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty is a matter for the United States Administration. They have made it clear that any change in policy would be a matter for consultations with us. The implications for our defence policy would be an important element in such consultations. The United States Administration are fully aware that we share their wish to see an arms race in outer space prevented and to work towards the success of the Geneva nuclear and space talks.

WEU Meeting

56. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues will be discussed at the meeting of the Western European Union on 27 to 28 April.

Mr. Eggar: At their meeting next month in Luxembourg, Western European Union Foreign and Defence Ministers will discuss issues relating to European security and progress in Western European Union reactivation.

Intermediate Nuclear Weapons

57. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received regarding reductions in intermediate nuclear weapons.

Mr. Eggar: The negotiations between the United States and Soviet Union on longer-range intermediate nuclear forces are continuing in Geneva. I have nothing further to report from the answer that my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 18 March at column 918.

Chemical Weapons Treaty

58. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response the United States has given to the challenge inspection proposal outlined by the United Kingdom for the verification of a chemical weapons treaty.

Mr. Eggar: The United States has made clear its willingness to consider any approach that provides a level of effectiveness equivalent to that of its own proposals on challenge inspection. The United Kingdom proposal remains under discussion among delegations in the chemical weapons negotiations in Geneva.

KMS Ltd.

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the nature of the employment of KMS Ltd. by his Department in 1982; and if he has any evidence that British subjects working for KMS are operating in *(a)* an operational or *(b)* a training role in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Eggar: KMS Ltd. was employed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office from May to August 1982 to provide close protection to Her Majesty's ambassador in Montevideo.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not employed KMS since then. We understand that KMS employs British citizens under a private commercial contract with the Sri Lankan Government to provide training services to its security forces. As a commercial company it contracts to provide services and is not controlled by Her Majesty's Government. We have throughout emphasised to KMS and to the Sri Lankan Government alike our clear view that British subjects should be involved only in training, and should certainly not be engaged in military operations of any kind in Sri Lanka.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Soil Survey

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give the total number of staff employed annually by the Soil Survey from 1979; and if he will give the projection for the next two years.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

	Number
1979	80
1980	79
1981	78
1982	78
1983	78
1984	78
1985	75
1986	40·5
1987	40

Subject to the negotiation of satisfactory terms, the Agricultural and Food Research Council and Cranfield Institute of Technology have agreed that the Soil Survey and Land Resource Centre should be transferred to Cranfield during 1987. It will be for Cranfield to determine staffing levels beyond 1987.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the establishment of a city technology college in Thamesmead.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend will be aware that there is considerable local interest in the possibility of establishing a city technology college in Thamesmead, which he has done much to encourage. We would gladly look at any proposals which emerge.

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science to whom the governing bodies of city technology colleges will be financially accountable.

Mrs. Rumbold: The governing bodies of city technology colleges will be financially accountable to those who fund them. They will be accountable to the Secretary of State in respect of grant received from the Department, and to their private sector sponsors for funding made available by them.

Senile Dementia

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what work is being sponsored by the Medical Research Council into the biological causes of senile dementia; and if he will make a progress report.

Mr. Walden: The Medical Research Council is supporting 20 projects into the biological causes of senile dementia. I will write to my hon. Friend with details. Progress in this work will continue to be reported in the scientific literature.

Student Grants

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now arrange for London weighting to be applied to the grants received by students attending the University of Surrey in Guildford.

Mr. Walden: No.

Children (Special Needs)

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what guidance he gives to local authorities on spending on teacher training for children with special needs;

(2) what action he plans to take to ensure that teachers of children with special needs have sufficient training.

Mrs. Rumbold: Training for teachers of children with special needs will be a national priority under the local education authority training grants scheme for 1987-88 as described in the Department's circular 6/86. As such, this training is eligible for grant at the higher rate of 70 per cent. within the amounts of expenditure notified to local education authorities; additional expenditure is eligible for 50 per cent. grant under the scheme.

My right hon. Friend will also be taking the training needs of these teachers into consideration when determining the arrangements for the scheme in 1988-89.

Teachers' Superannuation Fund

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science for each of the past five years, what has been the excess of income over expenditure for the teachers' superannuation fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is no teachers' superannuation fund and consequently there are no cash surpluses. Teachers' and employers' contributions are paid into the Consolidated Fund and benefits are paid out of moneys voted by Parliament. An account is maintained of receipts and payments under the Teachers' Superannuation Regulations 1976 (as amended) or under previous provisions. The balance in the account and any excess of receipts over payments each year are deemed to be invested in Government securities and interest added accordingly to the account. These notional investments are selected by the Secretary of State after consultation with the Government Actuary.

Copies of the accounts for 1981-82 to 1984-85 are in the Library. A copy of the account for 1985-86 will be placed in the Library in the next few days.

Schools (Homework)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will publish the findings of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools survey into good practices in schools in relation to homework.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The inspectorate's report on its limited inspection of the extent, nature and quality of homework in all types of school has been published today. The report draws attention to examples of good practice. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Her Majesty's inspectors found that the potential of homework as part of the learning process was not being fully exploited in many schools. Its most successful use was where it was interpreted and implemented flexibly as part of the school's policy for the curriculum which was understood by staff, pupils and parents, and where it was clearly related to other teaching and learning approaches. Other hallmarks of good practice included high-quality assignments to pupils which were appropriate to their age and ability; and use of the opportunity to develop skills of independent learning and to make the most of the local environment. Good practice also depended upon enlisting the constructive support of parents and other adults.

The findings confirm the Government in their view that appropriately set and marked homework valuably reinforces work in the classroom. It can support the objectives of the school curriculum in a number of ways, for example by extending the pupils' day and by giving individual pupils work which is matched to their ability. But it is also clear that parents have a central role to play in co-operating with teachers to ensure that homework is done and to get best value out of it for their children. Too often parents ignore their responsibilities, allow TV to take precedence over homework, and fail to make the contribution they might to raising standards in schools.

I hope that, in discharging their responsibilities for the curriculum under the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, local education authorities, governing bodies and head teachers will consider carefully the findings of this report and will review the place of homework in the work of their schools. Every local education autho ity and school should have a policy for homework as part of its policy for the curriculum as a whole. It should state clearly what is expected of parents in order to make homework an effective contribution to their child's education. The policy should offer guidance on the amount, range and character of homework which should be expected of pupils at different ages and abilities in both the primary and secondary stages. It should recognise the different needs of pupils and the importance of homework being properly assessed in ways that are helpful and constructive for the individual pupil; and it should give guidance on ways of helping pupils whose home circumstances make it difficult for them to study at home.

I shall take account of the report's conclusions in the proposals I am developing for a national school curriculum.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing, for each year, 1982-83 onwards, an analysis of capital allocations each year expressed as a percentage of

expenditure bids submitted, broken down between *(a)* local education authorities in Greater London, *(b)* metropolitan district education authorities outside Greater London and *(c)* non-metropolitan county education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 March 1987, c. *260*.]: The information requested for the years 1984-85 to 1987-88 is given in the following table. Authorities were not asked for cash plans for 1982-83 or 1983-84, so percentage figures cannot be given for those years.

Local Education Authority	*Authorities allocations as a percentage of their plans*			
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
(a) LEAs in Greater London				
Barking	[1]207	59	31	38
Barnet	89	45	22	16
Bexley	61	36	31	61
Brent	66	19	33	30
Bromley	13	14	52	49
Croydon	71	60	79	46
Ealing	50	73	38	28
Enfield	64	70	42	41
Haringey	42	25	18	13
Harrow	19	10	77	53
Havering	25	33	37	36
Hillingdon	25	22	17	28
Hounslow	62	34	14	24
Kingston-upon-Thames	50	52	28	17
Merton	48	54	30	44
Newham	49	33	19	23
Redbridge	51	77	53	60
Richmond-upon-Thames	35	50	24	9
Sutton	45	49	25	13
Waltham Forest	34	42	55	49
Inner London	44	54	43	34
(b) Metropolitan districts outside Greater London				
Birmingham	68	56	56	35
Coventry	57	42	35	46
Dudley	65	38	30	26
Sandwell	50	43	29	19
Solihull	64	49	49	28
Walsall	25	41	30	33
Wolverhampton	61	54	21	27
Knowsley	77	49	54	20
Liverpool	61	58	37	19
St. Helens	70	57	33	17
Sefton	36	81	67	39
Wirral	52	30	50	27
Bolton	69	43	34	33
Bury	57	53	89	32
Manchester	63	42	30	27
Oldham	55	38	49	58
Rochdale	39	62	48	40
Salford	37	54	48	62
Stockport	[1]115	52	39	31
Tameside	55	39	18	21
Trafford	63	50	47	36
Wigan	66	37	72	60
Barnsley	47	89	55	49
Doncaster	69	31	44	91
Rotherham	40	27	35	12
Sheffield	60	43	30	30
Bradford	37	62	70	25
Calderdale	32	36	70	56
Kirklees	56	48	26	19
Leeds	56	36	31	22
Wakefield	40	43	61	40
Gateshead	15	30	29	27
Newcastle upon Tyne	63	43	30	36
North Tyneside	20	52	48	43
South Tyneside	34	47	25	38
Sunderland	66	65	27	17
Non-Metropolitan Education Authorities				
Isle of Scilly	—	—	—	50
Avon	48	36	38	40
Bedfordshire	54	30	31	26
Berkshire	81	65	51	43
Buckinghamshire	37	47	35	58
Cambridgeshire	76	67	53	34
Cheshire	70	53	34	54
Cleveland	49	60	39	51
Cornwall	63	73	47	70
Cumbria	50	72	40	46
Derbyshire	67	67	52	45
Devon	87	58	50	42
Dorset	62	61	41	45
Durham	48	67	36	22
East Sussex	45	61	37	32
Essex	38	41	36	34
Gloucestershire	44	64	64	70
Hampshire	47	50	44	38
Hereford and Worcester	50	55	49	46
Hertfordshire	93	71	43	29
Humberside	59	56	70	72
Isle of Wight	66	58	50	43
Kent	50	55	65	56
Lancashire	81	76	58	32
Leicestershire	86	55	57	41
Lincolnshire	50	40	65	60
Norfolk	55	46	63	64
North Yorkshire	49	57	45	40
Northamptonshire	60	72	58	37
Northumberland	39	54	37	32
Nottinghamshire	61	71	52	43
Oxfordshire	78	40	15	17
Shropshire	48	69	49	62
Somerset	76	42	30	42
Staffordshire	70	71	53	42
Suffolk	78	60	68	76
Surrey	52	45	33	41
Warwickshire	52	55	41	32
West Sussex	77	61	35	23
Wiltshire	57	55	44	45

[1] The information given in the authority's plans was incomplete, and compensating adjustments were subsequently made; the allocation was greater than 100 per cent. of planned expenditure as initially notified.

THE ARTS

Theatre Audiences

Mr. Wareing asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had about possible initiatives to widen the audience for theatre.

Mr. Luce: The recent report to the Arts Council on the theatre in England looked inter alia, at widening the audience; I look forward to receiving the council's views. The Arts Council already includes in its criteria for the allocation of grant the extent of an arts body's commitment to attracting wider audiences. My new arts marketing scheme will, I hope, also encourage many arts bodies to produce imaginative ideas for improving their marketing.

Industrial Archaeology

Mr. Adley asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his arts policy priorities insofar as they relate to industrial archaeology.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to report that many museums in both public and private sectors are active in the field of industrial archaeology and liaise with other organisations which have interests in this area.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory and publish the percentage of entrants to the Privy Council Office who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Luce: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today, which also applies to the staff of the Privy Council.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Dykes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the scheme of value added tax scale charges for fuel used by businesses for private motoring will apply to vehicles other than cars.

Mr. Brooke: No. Although the legislation in the Finance Act 1986 is widely drawn, the derogation for which application was made under article 27 of the sixth VAT directive was confined to cars and there will therefore be no change in the VAT treatment of road fuel used by businesses for private journeys in vehicles other than cars. However, Customs will be keeping the operation of the scheme under review and any changes found to be necessary will be announced in due course.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the most recent year for which figures are available, the revenue from capital gains tax and the amount collected on the disposal of *(a)* shares and *(b)* real property; and if he will give separate figures for the personal sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimated receipts in 1986-87 are £1,050 million from capital gains tax and £650 million from tax on capital gains within corporation tax. Capital gains tax applies to gains realised by individuals and trusts and corporation tax to gains realised by companies.

Virtually all of the tax yield is derived from disposals of shares and real property, with 50 to 60 per cent. of the total from shares.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will describe the types of studies that were undertaken to plan the Government data network; and whether he will place these studies in the Library.

Mr. Brooke: Planning Government telecommunications is an evolutionary process. The current proposals for the Government data network derive from the data communications recommendations of the "Eosys" Study. Extracts from that study and the Government's response were published in 1984 as "Strategic Study of Government Administrative Telecommunications", IT series No. 5. A copy is in the Library. Follow-up work included a major study, by PACTEL, in 1985, of "Non-Telephony Administrative Telecommunications Needs", which was distributed and discussed among Departments. I have placed a copy in the Library. Those studies envisaged an integrated Government network for both speech and data transmission, developing incrementally as a longer-term objective. Other work has been done by individual Departments to determine their telecommunications strategies and requirements. The proposals for a Government data network are one way of making the first step towards an integrated network.

Launderettes

Dr. Glyn asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from organisations representing the owners and operators of launderettes about the effect of value added tax on launderettes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: My colleagues and I have received four letters from two hon. Members about various aspects of the VAT treatment of launderettes.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his reply of 9 February, *Official Report*, columns *31-32*, concerning the rate of exchange between sterling and the European currency unit, he will update the appropriation figures in table C and convert European currency units to sterling for the years 1984-86 at the average rates for sterling against the European currency unit in the European monetary system and for 1987 at the average for this year to date.

Mr. Brooke: It is not possible to update the appropriation figures in table C because the relevant figures for 1986 will not become available until the European Court of Auditors report for 1986 is published towards the end of this year. Average exchange rates between sterling and the European currency unit have been used up to 1985 in table C. The average exchange rate for 1986 was £1 = 1·489 ecu. The average exchange rate for 1987 until the end of February was £1 = 1·353 ecu.

Pensions

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, following his Budget proposals, any of the pension rights secured by additional voluntary contributions can be commuted into a tax-free lump sum, whether any restrictions will apply only to contributions paid after 17 March 1987 regardless of when the arrangements to pay such contributions was entered into; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

MV Silver Sea

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 13 March, *Official Report*, columns *319-20*, about MV Silver Sea on what date Her Majesty's Customs and Excise began its inquiries; when he expects the inquiries to be completed; and whether he will place a copy of any report on the conclusion of the inquiries in the Library.

Mr. Peter Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987]: It is not the practice of Customs and Excise to disclose details of operational matters while inquiries are continuing. I shall consider how far it might be appropriate to publish the results of these inquiries, once they are complete.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Joint Space Station

52. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on proposals for a joint space station.

Mr. Pattie: This would be premature at the moment. Since President Reagan invited the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Space Agency to join the United States of America in building a manned space station, studies have been proceeding on the elements that Europe might provide and on how we should use the space station to maximum benefit. The results of these studies are due later this year and only then will decisions be possible on whether to proceed into the development stage and with what goals.

Regional Aid

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list in the *Official Report* the amounts and recipients of regional development grants and regional selective assistance amongst companies in the Corby travel-to-work Area since 1 May 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The requested data, above certain thresholds, are published in *British Business*. The dates of publication, in respect of regional development grant (RDG) payments to the Corby travel-to-work area (TTWA), are as follows:

1981
Q1. 15 May 1981
Q2. 7 August 1981
Q3. 6 November 1981
Q4. 12 February 1982

1982
Q1. 7 May 1982
Q2. 13 August 1982
Q3. 29 October 1982
Q4. 4 February 1983

1983
Q1. 6 May 1983
Q2. 29 July 1983
Q3. 4 November 1983
Q4. 3 February 1984

1984
Q1. 25 May 1984
Q2. 31 August 1984
Q3. 9 November 1984
Q4. 15 February 1985

1985
Q1. 10 May 1985
Q2. 16 August 1985
Q3. 17 January 1986
Q4. 11 April 1986

1986
Q1. 20 June 1986
Q2. 19 September 1986
Q3. 5 December 1986

Notes:
Details published are:
(i) old RDG: individual payments which exceed £25,000;
(ii) new RDG: payments to individual undertakings in a travel-to-work area which cumulatively exceed £25,000 in any one quarter.

Offers of regional selective assistance (RSA) to the Corby TTWA were published in the following editions of *British Business:*

1980
Q3. 5 December 1980

1981
Q2. 25 September 1981
Q3. 4 December 1981
Q4. 26 March 1982

1982
Q1. 28 May 1982
Q2. 24 September 1982
Q3. 17 December 1982
Q4. 15 April 1983

1983
Q1. 24 June 1983
Q2. 18 November 1983
Q3. 17 February 1984
Q4. 6 July 1984

1984
Q1. 13 July 1984
Q2. 14 September 1984
Q3. 23 November 1984
Q4. 22 February 1985

1985
Q1. 28 June 1985
Q2. 30 August 1985
Q3. 29 November 1985
Q4. 28 February 1986

1986
Q1. 6 June 1986
Q2. 26 September 1986
Q3. 28 November 1986

Note:
Details show offers of £5,000 or more and are published after a first payment has been made.

Chrome Ore

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the quantity, and reason for disposal, of chrome ore which had been held in stockpiles of strategic materials.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 3 November 1986, at column 312, concerning the Government's policy on the maintenance of supplies of strategic minerals. It remains the Government's policy not

to confirm details of individual transactions relating to the strategic mineral stockpile given the commercially sensitive nature of the information concerned.

United States (Exports)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has for each of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries as to the value of exports per capita in United States dollars in *(a)* manufactured goods and *(b)* services, including oil, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the following table:

Exports per capita

	United States dollars	
	Manufactures (1985)	*Services (1984)*
Canada	2,122	338
United States	607	[4] 230
Japan	1,412	164
Australia	234	275
New Zealand	452	..
Austria	2,006	1,128
Belgium/Luxembourg	3,889	[3]1,204
Denmark	1,896	817
Finland	2,221	520
France	1,336	511
Germany	2,648	416
Greece	239	253
Iceland	661	1,413
Ireland	1,870	324
Italy	1,182	346
Netherlands	2,458	829
Norway	1,791	1,731
Portugal	[5] 422	192
Spain	454	287
Sweden	2,966	624
Switzerland	3,964	..
Turkey	99	24
United Kingdom	[1]1,200	[2] 521

[1] $1,410 in 1986.
[2] $650 in 1986.
[3] Belgium only.
.. Not readily available.

Sources:
OECD National Accounts Volume 2.
OECD Main Economic Indicators.
except:
[4] United States Bureau of Census.
[5] Portuguese Monthly External Trade Bulletin.

Note:
Manufactures taken as Standard International Trade Classification (revision 2), Sections 5 to 8; this excludes oil which is in Division 33.

Steel Industry

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how many persons were employed in the steel industries of each of the European Economic Community member states in 1979; and how many are now employed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Employment in ECSC production at the end of 1979 and end of November 1986, the latest period for which complete figures are available, is as follows:

Thousands: end of month

	December 1979	*November 1986*
Federal Republic of Germany	204·8	145·3
Belgium	48·7	31·7
France	120·6	69·5
Italy	98·7	67·6
Luxembourg	16·4	12·3
Netherlands	20·9	19·0
United Kingdom	156·6	55·9
Denmark	2·8	1·8
Ireland	0·7	0·6
Total EC(9)	670·0	403·7
Greece	—	4·2
Spain	—	51·1
Portugal	—	5·8
Total EC(12)	—	464·8

Source: Eurostat.

Imported Alcoholic Drinks (Japan)

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the GATT panel inquiring into the treatment of Japan of imported alcoholic drinks is to have its first meeting; and what is the nature of the evidence being submitted to it by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Community presented its outline case to the GATT on 18 March. The panel will hold its initial meeting on 28 April. The Government have liaised with and supported the Scotch whisky industry and the European Commission in the presentation of detailed evidence of Japanese discrimination against imported alcoholic drinks and will continue to do so.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to what percentage of the European market for chlorofluorocarbons is accounted for by British manufacturers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I regret that this information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether there are any other significant uses for halons in the United Kingdom, apart from in fire extinguishers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No; over 99 per cent. of halons are used in the controls of fires.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures he is taking to ensure that alternatives to fully halogenated chlorofluorocarbons are developed by British manufacturers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is open to British manufacturers to apply for grants, under the support for innovation scheme, towards the cost of developing new alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how many aerosol units containing chlorofluorocarbons are sold annually in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I regret this information is not available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation requiring aerosol manufacturers to label those capisters which use chlorofluorocarbons as a proportion of their propellant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government are participating in the United Nations environment programme discussions to decide on measures to control production of chlorofluorocarbons. In these circumstances, I consider a requirement for labelling of aerosol cans to indicate that they contain chlorofluorocarbons would be otiose.

Investment Business (Conduct Rules)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive from the Director General of Fair Trading his report on the proposed rules regarding the conduct of investment business submitted by the Securities and Investments Board on 10 February.

Mr. Channon: I have now received the Director General's report, and have placed a copy in the Library. The Director General concludes that certain of the proposed rules would have a significant anti-competitive effect. The Financial Services Act 1986 precludes transfer of powers under it to a designated agency unless I am satisfied that any significant anti-competitive effect is necessary in the interests of investors. In reaching this decision I will have regard not only to the Director General's reports, but also to other representations made to me, which should be sent to the Department by 10 April.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state the specific measures that his Department has taken to alleviate the adverse economic and social effects for the Plymouth travel-to-work area resulting from the projected job reductions at Her Majesty's dockyard, Devonport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *22*]: Regional selective assistance is available from my Department for manufacturing and service projects in the Plymouth travel-to-work area which create or safeguard employment and are of identifiable regional and national benefit. Investment support is also available under several national schemes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Desmond and Sons Ltd

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what steps he has taken to monitor the performance of the new cutting room at Desmond and Sons Ltd, Drumahoe, factory since his visit; and what assessment he has made of the company's progress towards achieving the goals outlined to him on that visit.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend visited the Drumahoe factory on 2 July 1986 to attend the official opening of the company's computerised warehouse and distribution centre. He was taken on a tour of the total facility at Drumahoe, including the cutting room, which had been opened in early 1985. No discussion took place during that visit regarding the performance of the cutting room and no goals for it were outlined to him.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what information was made available to him prior to the closure of the cutting room at Desmond and Sons Ltd., Drumahoe, regarding the company's decision.

Mr. Viggers: The company informed the Industrial Development Board in early Februry 1987 that it had excess cutting capacity and was starting consultations with the trade union representatives to discuss this problem.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement detailing what grants or loans from public funds and through public agencies were made to Desmond and Sons Ltd, in respect of the new technology introduced to the cutting room at its Drumahoe plant, indicating the specific items for which each element of aid was given; and what considerations particularly regarding employment levels determined the decision to give such aid.

Mr. Viggers: In November 1984 Desmond and Sons Ltd. accepted an offer of selective financial assistance from the Industrial Development Board towards the renewal of employment at the company's undertaking at Drumahoe for administration, warehousing and manufacture of light clothing. The total package of assistance offered amounted to £2,525,500, consisting of building; machinery and equipment and employment grants. The offer was not broken down over the various departments at Drumahoe. However, based on the expenditure to be incurred in the cutting room and the number of people employed there, it is estimated that £355,000 of grants could be attributed to that facility.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what assistance from public funds and public agencies has been given to each plant in Desmond and Sons Ltd. over the past five years, or is currently earmarked for the coming financial year, and detailing also all the equipment or development for which such aid has been granted.

Mr. Viggers: During the last five financial years assistance totalling £973,005 has been given by the Department of Economic Development and the Clothing Industry Training Board and selective financial assistance of £9,700,000 offered by the Industrial Development Board to Desmond and Sons Ltd.

The following amounts represent assistance from the youth training programme, formally the youth opportunities programme; key training activity and industrial placement support through the Clothing Industry Training Board; key workers scheme; young workers scheme; job introduction scheme and management development programme. These figures cannot however be broken down to identify assistance given to individual factories.

	£
1982-83	22,247
1983-84	12,720
1984-85	12,574
1985-86	74,536
[1]1986-87	174,284
Total	296,361

[1] To date.

In addition standard capital grants and grants under the training on employers premises scheme have been paid to individual factories as follows:

Location	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	[1]*1986-87* £	*Total* £
Omagh	65,828·98	28,267·22	53,886·47	33,977·50	—	181,960·17
Drumahoe	23,356·00	8,784·84	—	—	—	32,140·84
Irvinestown	5,671·40	39,732·00	16,230·74	36,953·00	1,332·00	99,919·14
Swatragh	8,868·00	3,252·00	11,237·60	17,344·76	—	40,702·36
Dungiven	16,808·06	1,370·00	21,046·39	30,520·74	2,340·00	72,085·19
Brittania Sportswear	9,552·00	9,306·00	2,501·00	15,208·69	6,622·20	43,189·89
Enniskillen	—	11,441·58	46,336·87	73,566·30	912·00	132,256·75
Claudy	—	14,037·00	5,455·80	10,703·00	11,654·00	41,849·80
Newbuildings	—	—	—	11,555·00	—	11,555·00
Springtown	—	—	—	20,985·00	—	20,985·00
	130,084·44	116,190·64	156,694·87	250,813·99	22,860·020	676,644·14

[1] To date

Standard capital grant payment related to machinery and/or equipment at the various sites.

Since March 1982 the Industrial Development Board has offered the company the following selective financial assistance.

Location	Total amount offered (£)	Purpose
New buildings, Springtown Omagh and Dungiven (Outwear Division)	3,087,500	Expansion of jackets trousers and jeans manufacture
Drumahoe, Claudy and Swatragh (Nightwear Division)	4,815,000	Re-equipment of pyjama and dressing gown operation plus new centralised warehouse
Enniskillen and Irvinestown (Leisurewear Division)	1,797,500	Establishment of operation for leisurewear manufacture

At present it is estimated that approximately £180,000 of grant will be given to the company, in respect of the youth training programme and the YTP work scheme, and approximately £15,000 in respect of the training and employers premises scheme, but estimates for payments under other schemes are not available.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he plans to take any action in the light of the closure of the Desmond and Sons Ltd. cutting room at Drumahoe following the installation of new technology with assistance from public funds; what information he has about the likely scale of redundancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Under the terms of the IDB offer of assistance if, within four years of installation, the company does not use any item of machinery or equipment for a period exceeding six months, the IDB has the right to demand repayment of the grant paid on that machinery.

Desmond and Sons Ltd. has informed the IDB that the cutting room at Drumahoe was closed on 27 February 1987, resulting in 16 redundancies. This was a commercial decision, for which the company was responsible.

IDB will monitor the situation to ensure that all terms and conditions relating to the payment of grant are met.

Landlords

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding the enforcement of articles 54 and 56 of the Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, indicating what responsibility the Department of the Environment or the Royal Ulster Constabulary exercise in the prosecution of landlords who illegally evict or harass tenants and if he will detail any record of involvement by his Department or the police in such prosecutions or other aspects of enforcement of these articles.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. 659]: Neither the Department of the Environment nor the RUC takes action to enforce articles 54 and 56 of the Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, but cases of eviction or harassment involving offences such as breach of the peace, criminal assault or intimidation are investigated by the RUC. Details of such cases are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits (Claimants)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims were received by Peckham, Camberwell, Southwark and Kennington Department of Health and Social Security supplementary benefit offices for single payments in respect of the exceptionally severe weather in January 1987; how many of these claims have been processed; and how many are outstanding.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. However, up to 24 February 1987—the latest date for which figures are available—the number of exceptionally cold weather £5 payments made and the number of claims refused by the Peckham, Camberwell, Southwark, Kennington and Oval offices were as follows:

Local office	Number of payments	Number refused
Peckham	2,006	266
Camberwell	1,854	157
Southwark	3,162	311
Kennington Park	2,988	440
Kennington (Oval)	1,136	244

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of claimants at the Peckham, Southwark, Camberwell and Kennington Department of Health and Social Security supplementary benefit offices who were entitled to severe weather payments actually claimed for the payments in January of this year.

Mr. Major: This information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Breast and Cervical Cancer

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to improve screening of women in the London borough of Waltham Forest for breast cancer and cervical cancer.

Mrs. Currie: Funds will be provided for a national breast cancer screening service to be established in England over the next three years on the basis of centres each serving a population of approximately half a million. It is for regional health authorities to decide in which districts the centres should be located and how the special allocations provided to establish them should be deployed.

As far as cervical screening is concerned, I understand that a computerised call-recall system will be implemented in the spring of 1988 by the Redbridge and Waltham Forest family practitioner committee and that call will then commence from women aged 20. A named person will be appointed in overall charge of the cervical screening programme as soon as possible.

Prison Visits

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the cost of providing support for visits to prisoners by their fiancées in line with that given to spouses.

Mr. Major: As well as assisting spouses, the prison visiting scheme also enables payments to be made to common-law spouses where the couple had lived together

as man and wife for a substantial period or where they have a child. As information about the relationship between prisoners and those wishing to visit them is not collected centrally, it is not possible to estimate the cost of extending this assistance to fiancées.

Local Offices (Staff)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average annual rate of turnover of staff in the Department of Health and Social Security offices dealing directly with the public for each of the last five years; and how the rate differed between clerical grades and executive grades.

Mr. Lyell: The following figures give the total number of local office staff leaving the Department in each grade in each of the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986. This number is then expressed as a percentage of the total local office staff in post at 1 April in each year. These figures are not available before 1983. Executive grades are principal, senior executive officer, higher executive officer and local officer I. Clerical grades are local officer II and clerical assistant.

DHSS: Local Office Leavers 1983-86

	1983			*1984*			*1985*			*1986*		
	Leavers	*Staff in post*	*Per cent.*	*Leavers*	*Staff in post*	*Per cent.*	*Leavers*	*Staff in post*	*Per cent.*	*Leavers*	*Staff in post*	*Per cent.*
Principal	46	250	18	18	229	8	21	243	9	15	253	6
Senior executive officer	64	394	16	20	374	5	21	378	6	19	377	5
Higher executive officer	233	2,689	9	91	2,579	4	110	2,720	4	96	2,808	3
Local officer I	1,170	16,134	7	689	15,868	4	686	16,219	4	653	16,520	4
Local officer II	3,118	32,203	10	2,999	30,834	10	3,382	32,048	11	3,556	31,234	11
Clerical assistant	1,381	9,084	15	1,404	8,679	16	1,530	8,763	18	1,709	8,996	19
TOTAL	6,012	60,754	10	5,221	58,563	9	5,750	60,371	10	6,048	60,188	10

Senile Dementia

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made in the clinical treatment of senile dementia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: There are a number of Medical Research Council units around the country looking at different aspects of senile dementia, but as yet there is no treatment which is able to prevent, arrest or reverse the process. Nor has any treatment been satisfactorily shown to improve brain function in people who are dementing.

At the present time the main aims of clinical treatment include treating any co-existing physical or mental illlnesses or disabilities which could accentuate the effects of dementia; using behavioural and living skill techniques to diminish behaviour problems and to enable people to live as independently as possible; and giving support and counselling to families and other carers.

Youth Suicide

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the annual youth suicide rate since 1980.

Mrs. Currie: The information is given in the table.

Number of deaths registered as suicide (ICD(9)[1] E950-E959) and rate per million population for males and females aged 10-14 and 15-19 years
England and Wales 1980-1985

	Year					
Sex and Age-group	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Males 10-14						
Number	2	4	4	2	1	2
Rate	0·99	2·00	2·06	1·06	0·55	1·15
Males 15-19						
Number	84	88	78	84	90	87
Rate	40·17	41·62	36·55	39·57	43·33	42·80
Females 10-14						
Number	1	1	3	6	1	1
Rate	0·52	0·53	1·63	3·35	0·58	0·61
Females 15-19						
Number	39	27	23	24	20	21
Rate	19·54	13·40	11·39	11·96	10·14	10·87

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Disabled People

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many registered disabled persons are living in the borough of Southwark;

(2) what information he has as to the proportion of disabled people who are house-bound in the London borough of Southwark;

(3) what information he has as to how many people with disabilities who live in the London borough of Southwark are of working age.

Mr. Major: The information available centrally relates to the numbers of disabled persons by age registered with Southwark social services department as being blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing or physically handicapped. This information does not distinguish those who are house-bound. This information is not a reliable guide to the numbers of disabled persons as registration is voluntary and the registers may lag in reflecting migration or deaths. People with multiple handicaps may also be on more than one register. The latest available data are given in the table.

London Borough of Southwark

	(As at 31 March)	*Total*	*Aged 16-64*
Numbers of persons registered as			
Blind:	(1986)	879	166
Partially sighted:	(1986)	457	89
Deaf:	(1986)	398	192
Hard of hearing:	(1986)	399	37
Physically handicapped:	(1984)	12,877	3,237

Immersion Hypothermia

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research work is being funded by public resources in the United Kingdom on the subject of immersion hypothermia in drowning.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mobility Allowance

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children in the London borough of Southwark are in receipt of mobility allowance.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects a reply will be sent to the letter from the Disablement Income Group to the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled, dated 11 December 1986 relating to mobility allowance.

Mr. Major: I wrote to the Disablement Income Group on 3 February.

Medical Act 1983 (Amendment) Bill

Dr. M. S. Miller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received which are unfavourable to the passage of the Medical Act 1983 (Amendment) Bill; and if he will place copies of any such representations in the Library.

Mr. Newton: The General Medical Council has consistently made clear that it would not find the additional powers which the Bill would confer helpful in fulfilling its primary function of protecting the public. The council's views were set out in a note sent to all hon. Members by its president under cover of a letter dated 6 June 1984. Copies will be placed in the Library. We have received no other representations unfavourable to the passage of the Bill.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations have been received urging the Department not to appeal against the decision of the tribunal which adjudicated on 16 December that the child care costs incurred by a working mother with a child and no husband could be set aside in the calculation of the amount of family income supplement due to her; what decision the Department has taken on the question of an appeal; and what reply was sent to those who made representations.

Mr. Major: The matter of an appeal to the Social Security Commissioner against a decision by a social security appeal tribunal is one for the independent adjudication officer and not for the Department. I understand that the adjudication officer applied to the Commissioner on 26 February for leave to appeal to him against the tribunal's decision. As far as we are aware, no representations urging against such an appeal have been received.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects a reply will be sent to the letters from the Disablement Income Group to the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled dated 3 August and 29 December 1986, relating to the severe disability premium.

Mr. Major: I replied to the letter dated 3 August on 4 November. In response to the letter dated 29 December I met representatives from the Disablement Income Group and other organisations on 21 January and wrote again on 4 February.

Pharamaceutical Industry (Expenditure)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated annual expenditure by the pharmaceutical industry on *(a)* drug promotion and *(b)* research.

Mr. Newton: The information we hold is derived from annual financial returns submitted for the purposes of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme by the 65 largest companies supplying medicines for use in the National Health Service. In 1984, the relevant expenditure by those companies was £146 million on promotion and £282 million on research and development.

Drug Consumption

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of adults are estimated to be taking in a typical week *(a)* prescribed drugs and *(b)* prescribed or non prescribed drugs.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not collected by the Department.

Drugs (Advertisements)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the regulatory requirements placed upon the pharmaceutical industry with regard to the advertising of their products;

(2) what use has been made of powers under section 95(1) of the Medicines Act 1968 to prohibit advertising relating to specified classes of drugs.

Mr. Newton: Under the Medicines Act 1968 it is an offence to issue false or misleading advertisements and advertising has to be consistent with the product licences governing the marketing of particular medicines.

The relevant subordinate legislation is as follows:

Reference	*Brief Description and Effect*
SI 1972 No. 2076	Form and content of data sheets.

Reference	Brief Description and Effect
SI 1975 No. 298[1]	Restrictions on advertisements for medicines with product licences or right.
SI 1975 No. 1326	Advertisements to be consistent with data sheets; other data sheets provision.
SI 1978 No. 41[1]	Governing advertisements of medicines to the public.
SI 1978 No. 1020	Format of advertisements to medical and dental practitioners.
SI 1979 No. 1760	Application to contact lens fluids.

[1] Made under S95(1) and other powers.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what study there has been of the number and nature of the pharmaceutical industry's breaches of the requirements regarding advertising;

(2) if his Department and the Medicines Commission will together review the procedures governing the advertising of pharmaceutical drugs in the light of the successful prosecution of a drug company for an advertising offence in December 1986.

Mr. Newton: The Department carefully studies the published reports of the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) code of practice committee. The Department prosecutes companies where the evidence warrants this. The prosecution referred to in the second question is the subject of appeal and it would therefore be inappropriate to comment upon it, or to review related issues, before the appeals are determined in court.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many complaints regarding advertising have been referred by his Department to the pharmaceutical industry's code of practice committee; and what percentage have been rejected by the committee.

Mr. Newton: In 1984-1986, three complaints were referred by the Department to the code of practice committee of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI).

The ABPI began communicating the findings of the committee to the Department of Health and Social Security, the British Medical Association, the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, the *British Medical Journal*, and the *Pharmaceutical Journal* in 1984. Since then it has investigated 117 allegations of breach of the code, of which 52 were upheld (including two of the cases referred by the Department).

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to provide a definition of the term legibility with regard to the statutory requirements relating to drug advertising.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so. The Medicines (Advertising to Medical and Dental Practitioners) Regulations 1978 already require that statements on side effects, precautions, contra-indications, dosage, and any warnings required by the licensing authority or its appropriate advisory body should be printed in a clear and legible manner and be placed in such a position that relationship to the claims for the product can readily be appreciated by the reader.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that no drug advertisements are published before they have been approved by the pharmaceutical industry's code of practice committee.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so. I do not believe that compulsion of this kind is necessary, given the statutory requirements and the self-regulatory systems developed by the pharmaceutical industry to meet its own circumstances.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many prosecutions there have been for infringements of the provisions of the Medicines Act which relate to advertising; who was prosecuted; and when the prosecutions took place.

Mr. Newton: Since 1980, the latest date from which information is readily available, there have been four prosecutions for infringements of the provisions of the Medicines Act 1968 and regulations made thereunder which relate to advertising. These are detailed in the table.

Person/Company prosecuted	Date
Intimates Mail Regd.	25 September 1981
L. S. Troop	15 March 1982
Kent Private Clinic and Dr. B. Richards	17 January 1986
Roussel Laboratories Ltd. and Dr. C. S. Good[1]	19 December 1986

[1] Appeals against conviction are pending.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will refer to the Committee on Safety of Medicines the question as to whether drug companies should be allowed to claim, in their advertisements, safety aspects for a drug solely on the basis of animal studies.

Mr. Newton: Meaningful advice cannot be given in general terms, but only in relation to particular medicines after considering all available information about them. When granting, reviewing or varying licences for particular medicines the licensing authority considers all factors relevant to safety in use, and consults as necessary the appropriate advisory body.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will appoint a new advisory committee with responsibility for the advertising of medicines and with powers similar to those of the Committee on Safety of Medicines and the Committee on Review of Medicines.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so. The functions of the Committees on Safety of Medicines and on Review of Medicines are to give professional scientific advice on the intrinsic safety, quality and efficacy of medicines. This governs the content of licences for particular medicines which must be adhered to in any advertisements.

Babies (Bottle Feeding Equipment)

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any plans to introduce regulations to ensure that all advertisements for bottle feeding equipment carry a statement indicating the case for breastfeeding;

(2) if he has any plans to establish a manufacturing and marketing code with the manufacturers of baby-feeding teats and bottles and breast pumps.

Mrs. Currie: Officials are discussing a voluntary code of marketing and advertising practice with the manufacturers and distributors aimed at promoting and protecting breastfeeding. I understand the British Standards Institute is preparing a British standard for teats, and that one for feeding bottles is contemplated.

Vehicle Emissions (Health)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research he is funding, or is intending to fund on the possible links between vehicle emissions and respiratory disease.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the possible health effects of vehicle emissions on cyclists.

Mrs. Currie: Observations that have been reported on the uptake of vehicle-derived pollutants, such as carbon monoxide and lead, do not show any higher values than among urban residents in general.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is funding any epidemiological studies to determine the effects of diesel emissions on human health.

Mrs. Currie: No. Findings are available from an earlier long-term study among London Transport employees, funded through the Medical Research Council, which is the main Government-funded agency for United Kingdom biomedical research receiving a grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. There are, of course, few opportunities for defining groups with exposure specifically to diesel emissions.

AIDS

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South on 13 March, *Official Report*, column *325*, how many meetings he and his Ministerial colleagues have had with religious leaders to discuss the subject of AIDS during the last six months.

Mr. Fowler: I have had several very useful meetings and other contacts with religious leaders on the subject of AIDS. I am most grateful for their understanding and co-operation, and I look forward to continuing this relationship.

Maternity Payments

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in London claimed maternity grant in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1981, *(c)* 1982, *(d)* 1983, *(e)* 1984, *(f)* 1985 and *(g)* 1986.

Mr. Major: It is estimated that the numbers of women who received the maternity grant in the Greater London council area in the years from 1980 to 1986 were as shown in the following table:

	Number
1980	81,500
1981	[1]
1982	82,800
1983	90,100
1984	107,950
1985	129,050
1986	[2]96,600

[1] Because of industrial action, no figures are held of the number of recipients in the year.
[2] To September 1986 only, the latest date for which figures are available.

Towers Hospital, Leicester

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the escape by a patient from Arnold Lodge regional secure unit, Towers hospital, Leicester, on Thursday 26 February;

(2) if he is satisfied with security arrangements at Arnold Lodge regional secure unit, Towers hospital, Leicester;

(3) how many paitents are currently at Arnold Lodge secure unit, Towers hospital, Leicester; and what is the staff/patient ratio;

(4) how many patients have absconded from Arnold Lodge secure unit, Towers hospital Leicester, since the opening of the regional secure unit;

(5) in the event of an escape from a regional secure unit who exactly is notified; and, in the case of the specific escape from Arnold Lodge, Leicester, whether the police were informed.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 4 March 1987, c. *627-28*]: The running of the Arnold Lodge secure unit is the responsibility of the Leicestershire district health authority. The unit currently has 30 beds available, of which normally 25 to 27 are in use. The minimum nurse/patient ratio is 2·3 nursing staff to every patient. I understand that, since the unit opened, there have been 17 cases in which patients have broken the terms of their authorised periods of time spent outside the unit either within or outside the main hospital precincts with or without an escort ("parole") which is allowed as part of the rehabilitation process. There has also been one escape. Parole is granted only after very careful consideration by the clinical team and on the basis that it is safe and that there is no forseeable danger of the patient breaking the parole agreement. Individual parole arrangements are reviewed each week. Very many parole decisions have been made since Arnold Lodge and its predecessor the interim secure unit at Grange Lodge were established.

Notification of an escape from the unit or of a breach in parole is a matter for local decision based on the individual circumstances of the case. In the latest incident on 26 February the patient escaped through a bathroom window and was detained by police about five hours later. Neither this nor any of the other recent incidents is regarded by the health authority at this stage as the result of a specific failure by staff. However, the health authority has reviewed parole procedures, tightened physical security and, following a report to the health authority in March, has established a committee of inquiry to inquire into the circumstances of the recent incidents and to make any necessary recommendations about the unit. Ministers have asked to be kept informed of the outcome of that inquiry. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairman of the Leicestershire health authority to obtain any further information he requires.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Alexander asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will designate the village of Laxton in Nottinghamshire an environmentally sensitive area under the Agriculture Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The further areas which we shall designate next year will be selected from the shortlist which the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council submitted to me last year. We recognise that there are a number of areas of environmental value, including Laxton, which are not on that list but we are anxious to give priority to those areas which the Government's environmental advisers have jointly identified as candidates for early designation.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the additional funds to be provided for environmentally sensitive areas in 1988 will be used to designate further areas throughout the United Kingdom; and if it is his intention to designate new areas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Yes. With colleagues in the other Agriculture Departments we intend to provide additional funds for environmentally sensitive areas in 1988. My right hon. Friend the Minister will shortly be considering further areas for designation in England.

Rabbits

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Ministry is carrying out to establish the effectiveness and humaneness of live catch cage traps for controlling rabbits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Scientists in my Department have designed and developed a baited cage trapping system to catch rabbits live at the site of damage. The system is currently undergoing intensive trials to determine whether it is a cost-effective and humane method of controlling rabbits.

Food Aid

Mrs. Shields asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of food available for distribution under the European Economic Community food aid scheme has now been delivered.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Food (Radioactive Contamination)

Mr. Baldry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions are at present imposed, or have recently been imposed, on the movement, sale and consumption of animal and vegetable products, live or dead, as a direct or indirect result of radioactive contamination anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

EC (Wheat Sales)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about recent sales of wheat by the European Economic Community to the Soviet Union and the effect of such sales upon the feed price to the poultry industry.

Mr. Gummer: So far in the current marketing year export certificates for 11·85 million tonnes of wheat have been issued by the European Community; there are no special arrangements for exports to the Soviet Union and it is not possible to say what proportion of these exports are destined for that country. The price of feedwheat in the United Kingdom is below the intervention price and the poultry industry is likely to be paying a little more for its supplies than at this time last year and appreciably less than it was paying in March 1983 and March 1984.

Salcombe Estuary

Mr. Steen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a grant towards the cost of dredging the low-water channel in the Salcombe estuary for commercial shellfish vessels working the shellfish quays;

(2) when he issued a consent for the dumping of the dredged soil from the low-water channel in the Salcombe estuary; and if there were any conditions attached to this consent;

(3) if he will make funds available to the Salcombe harbour board to fund the costs of the proposed monitoring by the Nature Conservancy Council of the disposal of the dredged soil from the low-water channel in the licensed dumping ground.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987]: I shall send to my hon. Friend a copy of the licence issued on 5 March under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 for the disposal of dredged spoil from Salcombe estuary.

My Department informed the harbour authority at Salcombe on 20 February that a grant of approximately 50 per cent. would be payable towards the eligible expenditure on dredging the access channels. This does not include the cost of the monitoring that the Nature Conservancy Council wishes to undertake in respect of these operations.

Outgoers Scheme

Mr. Walters asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider increasing the level of compensation under the outgoers scheme for dairy farmers.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987]: I have no plans to do so.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Houses (Southwark)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses were completed in the London borough of Southwark in each successive year from 1979 to 1986, inclusive.

Mr. Tracey: Reported completions of dwellings for the borough council and for the Greater London council in Southwark appear in the following issues of "Local Housing Statistics" which are available in the Library:

Year	Issue Number	Table Number
1979	53	5, 7
1980-83	73	1, 3
1984	77	1
1985	78	1
1986 1st half	80	1

The returns from Southwark were incomplete when the 1985 figures were published: 38 completions for the borough have now been reported.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in England that have been, or are due to be, damaged or destroyed through developments which have been given planning permission since 1977, the type of development, the county and district or borough in which they are situated, and the date when permission was given.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Nature Conservancy Council is compiling the information requested in respect of Great Britain. I shall write to the hon. Member with the details, including those for the areas for which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland are responsible, as soon as the information is available.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the next rate support grant report.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) on 20 March at column *650*.

Rates

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the proposed minimum proportion of rates or community charge to be paid by persons on low incomes.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this issue.

Anti-fouling Paint

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if the two sites for testing anti-fouling paint on the Yealm and in the Salcombe estuary have been licensed by Her Majesty's Government; and whether the companies are required to report the chemicals which they are using;

(2) if, in the light of the effect on fisheries of anti-fouling paints, he will take steps to require future trials of paint to take place away from coastal sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The two sites for testing anti-fouling paints on the Yealm and in the Salcombe estuary are not currently licensed by Her Majesty's Government. The companies concerned are not currently required to report the chemicals being tested. However, from 1 July such facilities and the activities carried out at them will be subject to the provisions of part III of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. The detailed arrangements for regulating such sites, including their location and operation, are still under consideration but it is intended that all the relevant factors will be taken into account.

National Parks Committees

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he conducts when deciding who to appoint and reappoint to the national parks committees.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Countryside Commission is my right hon. Friend's statutory advisers in this matter, but it is also his custom to seek the views of the national park chairmen. In addition, he considers nominations from a wide variety of sources including hon. Members with national park constituencies.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each publication produced by his Department for public distribution since 1979 together with the date of publication, the print-run, the total cost, the number distributed, the method of distribution, the subject covered and the target group.

Mr. Ridley: There is a comprehensive list published annually of all Department of the Environment and Department of Transport publications in the Library, including those published by HMSO. The rest of the information requested is not held centrally and could not be provided without incurring disproportinate expense.

Departmental Costs

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, if he will give *(a)* the total cost of running his Department and *(b)* the total number of civil servants employed in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is as follows:

	DOE(c) administrative expenditure (£,000)		Number of civil servants employed	
	Cost	Real terms[1]	at 1 April	
1979-80	87,078	140,853	1979	11,217
1980-81	116,060	158,256	1980	10,530
1981-82	114,679	142,381	1981	9,821
1982-83	112,395	130,114	1982	8,771
1983-84	145,409	161,148	1983	7,813
1984-85	130,294	138,416	1984	6,605
1985-86	139,563	139,563	1985	6,561
1986-87	140,750	136,650	1986	6,521

[1] These figures are expressed at 1985-86 prices, in line with the latest Public Expenditure White Paper (Command 56).

The expenditure figures include all capital and current administrative expenditures. For 1986-87 a Treasury definition of running costs has been established which excludes capital and certain minor current expenditures on this basis the figure for 1986-87 would be £133,582,000. (£129,691 in real terms).

Football Matches

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which soccer matches he has attended since his appointment.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has attended no football matches since his appointment. As well as attending a number of other sporting events, I have attended the following first-class football matches in an official capacity:

Date	
18 January 1986	Tottenham v Manchester City (league)
26 January 1986	Chelsea v Liverpool (FA Cup)
8 March 1986	Scunthorpe United v Orient (league)
12 April 1986	Reading v York City (league)
23 April 1986	England v Scotland (Home International)
10 May 1986	Liverpool v Everton (FA Cup Final)
11 June 1986	England v Poland (World Cup, Mexico)
12 June 1986	Northern Ireland v Brazil (World Cup, Mexico)
13 June 1986	Scotland v Uruguay (World Cup, Mexico)
21 September 1986	Everton v Manchester United (league)
26 November 1986	National 5-a-side Championships, Wembley
13 December 1986	Norwich City v Arsenal (league)
14 December 1986	Bradford City v England XI (Special fixture)
24 January 1987	Luton Town v Leicester City (league)

During the next month I will be attending three matches:

23 March 1987	Manchester United v Nottingham Forest (league)
5 April 1987	Arsenal v Liverpool (Littlewoods Cup final)
18 April 1987	Bristol Rovers v Bristol City (league)

Southwark

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount in 1985 prices for each year since 1985 that the London borough of Southwark has been allowed to spend under the rate-capping legislation, disregarding any additional allowance given for the transfer of Greater London council services.

Mr. Chope: The expenditure levels which my right hon. Friend has determined under the Rates Act 1984 for Southwark, expressed in 1985-86 prices are:

	£ million
1985-86	108·437
1986-87 without allowance for former GLC service	105·279
1986-87 with allowance for former GLC services	130·281
1987-88	124·671

Figures expressed at 1985-86 prices using the GDP deflator. In 1987-88 no split was made between former borough and former GLC services.

Pension Investment Research Centre

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for their fiduciary duty towards local authority pensioners under the local government superannuation fund regulations of the use made of, and financial support given to, the Pension Investment Research Centre by certain local authorities in London.

Mr. Chope: The Local Government Superannuation Regulations 1986 set out a number of rules governing the investment of these superannuation funds. They impose limits on the proportion of a fund which may be invested in certain ways, and require fund authorities to obtain expert financial advice at reasonable intervals. The accounts of the funds are subject to audit under part III of the Local Government Finance Act 1982, and the auditor may apply to the court for a declaration that an item of expenditure is contrary to law. Alternatively, it would be open to a person with sufficient interest to apply for judicial review under Order 53 of the Rules of the Supreme Court. My right hon. Friend considers that these safeguards are adequate, but will keep the position under review.

Direct Labour Organisations

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take any action against loss-making direct labour organisations including the one operated by the London borough of Camden.

Mr. Chope: As a result of Camden's losses of over £300,000 over the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86, my right hon. Friend has asked the council to submit a special report on its DLO's major new construction activities. My right hon. Friend has also asked Hull city council to submit a special report, following its DLO's losses of over £1·6 million on major new construction in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Both these requests follow the decision, to which I referred in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) on 18 February 1987, to request special reports from authorities after two consecutive failures to achieve the prescribed rate of return on capital.

Landscape Conservation Orders

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the organisations that have responded to his Department's document entitled "Protecting the Countryside: the Government's Consultation Proposals for Landscape Conservation Orders", and if he will make a statement about the responses received.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987]: Consultees were invited to submit comments by 6 March. The following organisations have responded:

Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Drainage Authorities
Association of National Park Officers
Beautiful Britain
British Horse Society
British Waterways Board
Broads Authority
Broads Society
Central Council of Physical Recreation
Chiltern Society
Civil Trust
Council for Environmental Conservation
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Council on Tribunals
County Landowners Association
Countryside Commission
Crown Estate Commissioners
Cumbria County Council
Dartmoor National Park Committee
Dartmoor Preservation Association
Duchy of Lancaster
Exmoor National Park Committee
London Boroughs Association
National Caving Association

Natural Environment Research Council
National Trust
National Farmers' Union
Nature Conservancy Council
North Yorkshire Moors Association
North York Moors National Park
Open Spaces Society
Ramblers Association
Royal Automobile Club
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Society for Nature Conservation
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Royal Town Planning Institute
Timber Growers UK Ltd.
Water Companies Association
Yorkshire Dales National Park Committee
Yorkshire Dales Society

In addition, comments have been received from seven individuals. My colleagues in the Welsh and Scottish Offices have received 12 responses. With the agreement of the respondents, I have arranged for copies of some responses to be made available for inspection in the Library of the House today. I shall give very careful consideration to all of the points raised in the responses, before announcing how the Government intend to proceed.

Salcombe Estuary

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the degree of consultation with the local harbour board undertaken by the Nature Conservancy Council prior to the designation of the entire Salcombe estuary as a site of special scientific interest;

(2) what representations he has received on the designation of the entire Salcombe estuary as a site of special scientific interest in the light of the proposed dredging of the low water and other channels for fishing vessels.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, Monday 23 March 1987]: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the harbour authorities were consulted before the Salcombe estuary was notified as a site of special scientific interest in February 1987. Owners and occupiers of land who have been notified may make representations or objections to the Nature Conservancy Council within four months of the date of notification. The Nature Conservancy Council has not to date received any representations relating to the proposed dredging operations.

Council of Environment Ministers

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Council of the Environment Ministers meeting on 19 and 20 March.

Mr. Waldegrave: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting.

The Council reached agreement in principle on a resolution concerning the fourth environment action programme. The resolution recalls the principles and objectives of the Community's environment policy as set out in the Single European Act, emphasises the importance of the effective implementation of environmental legislation, and urges the integration of environmental considerations into other areas of Community policy. The resolution will not be formally adopted until parliamentary consideration has been completed.

The Council reached agreement on the Community's approach to negotiating a protocol to control chloroflurocarbons (CFCs) in the context of the Vienna convention for the protection of the ozone layer. This was in the form of guidelines for the Commission to follow, on behalf of the Community, during negotiations. The guidelines envisage a three part protocol: a freeze on CFC production at current levels; to be followed by a specified percentage reduction of production; with a third and essential element of regular scientific, technical and economic reviews.

Useful progress was made on vehicle emissions. A majority of member states reaffirmed their commitment to the proposals known as the Luxembourg package. Although it was not possible to achieve agreement on standards for particulate emissions from diesel engined cars, a compromise solution on gaseous emissions from heavy vehicles, based on proposals developed during the United Kingdom presidency, received support from most member states. The Council also reached a measure of agreement on a proposal for member states to be allowed to prohibit the sale of leaded regular petrol.

The Council reached agreed conclusions on the general approach to the draft directive on large combustion plants. further progress was made on the question of emission standards for new plants. In addition, although some member states maintained their general reserves on the draft directive, all delegations undertook to contribute to an agreement at the May Council.

The Council agreed the directive amending directive 75/716/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the member states relating to the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels (gas oil). The directive on the control of pollution by asbestos and an amendment to the major accident hazards directive were formally adopted.

The Council conducted a preliminary examination of the proposal for a Council regulation concerning the export from and import into the Community of certain dangerous chemicals, and instructed the Committee of Permanent Representatives to seek agreement on the basis of the principles already adopted by the OECD and incorporated into the draft UNEP guidelines. The Council welcomed the actions of those member states which wished to go beyond these principles and to experiment with other systems, including forms of "Prior Informed Consent" by the importing country, so that the practical value of such approaches could be tested.

Finally, Environment Ministers formally launched European Year of the Environment in Brussels with the unveiling of a sculpture on the theme of technology and the environment.

London Scientific Services

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to follow up assurances made by Her Majesty's Government during the passage of the Local Government Act 1985 in respect of the London scientific services staffing levels.

Mr. Chope: The assurances given by Her Majesty's Government during the passage of the Local Government Bill 1985 related to safeguarding the scientific and

technical services during the transitional period. Such assurances were incorporated into the provisions of schedule 13, paragraph 8 to the Act. I understand that the London Residuary Body is consulting the clients of the London scientific services and will decide what future level of staffing is appropriate in the light of their needs.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the number of staff employed within London scientific services on 31 March 1986 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Chope: The number of staff employed within the London scientific services on 31 March 1986 and 2 March 1987 were 162 and 145 respectively.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) of 19 March, *Official Report*, columns *558-60*, if he will provide an analysis by *(a)* type of assets, *(b)* disposal price and *(c)* property location of the estimated £141·4 million of capital receipts to be distributed by the London residuary body.

Mr. Chope: The estimated capital receipts cash entitlement of £141·4 million to be distributed by 31 March 1988 amongst rating authorities in London is based on estimates and forecasts made by the LRB. The Department does not have a detailed analysis of this amount.

The gross amounts of capital receipts receivable from major sources in 1986-87 and 1987-88 are as follows, together with the net amounts estimated to be distributable after deductions made by LRB for various purposes.

£ million

	1986-87			*1987-88*		
	Housing	*Non-housing*	*Total*	*Housing*	*Non-housing*	*Total*
Gross Receipts						
Disposal of land and property	4·5	27·0	31·5	15·0	85·0	100·0
Repayment of principal	30·5	2·5	33·0	30·0	3·0	33·3
Sales of council houses	31·9	nil	31·9	33·5	nil	33·5
	66·9	29·5	96·4	78·8	88·0	166·8
Net Receipts						
Distributable	28·3	3·4	31·7	48·0	61·7	109·7

Further details of these receipts will be published in the RB's accounts for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) of 19 March, *Official Report*, columns *558-60*, how much of the estimated £141·4 million of capital receipts is currently held by the London residuary body.

Mr. Chope: The £141·4 million estimate contained in that answer represents the estimated £263·3 million total of capital receipts to be received by the LRB up to 31 March 1988, less amounts to be deducted by LRB for various purposes. The Department does not keep running estimates of total LRB capital receipts.

The Local Government Reorganisation (Capital Money) (Greater London) Order 1987 (S.I. No. 118) required that any capital money available in any financial year should be distributed, so far as possible, by 31 March, with final adjustments being made before the following 30 June. The LRB has notified rating authorities in London that it expects to distribute £31·7 million capital receipts cash entitlements by 31 March 1987.

DEFENCE

Ships' Logs

7. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent guidance has been issued to the Royal Navy about the practice on retention and storage of ships' logs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Guidance has been issued to commanding officers to clarify the regulations concerning the safekeeping of completed ships' logs.

Export Sales Contracts

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of defence exports sales contracts in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The detailed figures are not yet available, but it is already clear that 1986 was a very successful year for our firms active in this field.

Ballistic Missile Attacks

15. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what means the United Kingdom possesses to detect an attack by ballistic missiles upon the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: Early warning of a strategic ballistic missile attack on the United Kingdom would be provided by the ballistic missile early warning system at RAF Fylingdales.

Defence Expenditure

16. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to conclude his annual review of defence expenditure.

Mr. Stanley: In the normal way my right hon. Friend will be considering the annual long-term costing over the next few months.

Helicopters

17. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to reach a decision on ordering light support helicopters for the Army.

50. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to make a statement on helicopter policy and the procurement of helicopters.

51. **Dr. Hampson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make a statement on helicopter procurement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence hopes to be in a position to make an announcement about our future support helicopter requirements shortly.

Goods and Services

18. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide the latest estimate of those employed in businesses throughout the United Kingdom providing goods and services for his Department.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is estimated that, in 1985-86, 285,000 people were directly and 230,000 people indirectly employed in United Kingdom industry providing goods and services to the Ministry of Defence.

Procurement Controls

19. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what he expects to be the total value of defence procurement contracts in the current financial year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The value of work placed to contract in the current financial year of up to the end of January is around £7·4 billion and is expected to be of the order of £9 billion in the full year.

41. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made in defence procurement procedures designed to avoid cost overruns since his Department last gave evidence to the Committee of Public Accounts.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Since December 1986, when the chief of defence procurement last gave evidence to the Committee of Public Accounts, the Ministry of Defence has continued to implement and monitor the significant changes in working practices then described to the Committee and which were later strongly welcomed and endorsed in the sixth report from the Committee, published on 11 March 1987.

Small Firms Initiative

20. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's small firms initiative.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens).

Sub-strategic Nuclear Warheads

21. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the number of sub-strategic nuclear warheads that would remain in Europe following the elimination of long-range intermediate nuclear forces.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the information on shorter-range nuclear systems in Europe set out in annex A to the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd. 9763-I).

Short-range Nuclear Forces

22. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the development of short-range nuclear forces in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

33. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the development of short-range nuclear forces in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 5 February, at column *802*.

Cruise Missiles

23. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the number of cruise missiles already deployed in the United Kingdom.

27. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of cruise missiles already deployed in the United Kingdom.

45. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of cruise missiles already deployed in the United Kingdom.

48. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of cruise missiles already deployed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on 13 May 1986, at column *546*.

46. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will slow down the deployment of cruise missiles in the United Kingdom during discussions on the control of intermediate nuclear weapons between the Soviet Union and the United States of America.

Mr. Stanley: No. We do not consider that such a step would help us to achieve a successful outcome to the INF negotiations.

Mine Warfare Forces

24. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the present numbers and readiness of the Royal Navy's mine warfare forces; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Since May 1979 the Government have carried out a comprehensive modernisation of the Royal Navy's mine countermeasures forces. We have ordered eight more Hunt Class dual-role minehunters-sweepers,

the entire new class of 12 River class minesweepers, and the first of the new class of single role minehunters. I am satisfied with the readiness of our MCMV forces and that the scale of our investment in them is the right balance within the overall naval programme.

Defence White Paper

25. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the Defence White Paper.

31. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to my reply earlier today to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Trident

26. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of conventionally armed troops that could be financed by the savings made net of cancellation charges should Trident be abandoned.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 15 January, at column 98. The savings on future planned expenditure if Trident were cancelled now or in the near future would finance about one additional complete armoured division spread over the next 13 or so years.

47. **Mr Franks** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the placing of the orders for Trident 2 and Trident 3.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The second Trident submarine, SSBN 06, will be ordered later this year and the others for SSBNs 07 and 08 will be placed progressively thereafter.

Officers (Statistics)

28. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of current general officers are former or serving cavalry officers.

Mr. Freeman: Fourteen per cent.

Official Secrets Act

29. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many cases of unauthorised disclosure of information under the Official Secrets Act involving his Department occurred in each of the last five years; how many such cases were dealt with as internal disciplinary matters; and in how many cases police inquiries were initiated.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Statistics are not kept centrally on the numbers of alleged unauthorised disclosures of defence information. Investigations of such cases very occasionally show that such disclosures were deliberate; more frequently they are inconclusive, or they show that there was no breach of security or that any breach was due to carelessness. Any prosecutions under the Official Secrets Acts must be authorised by my right hon. Friend the Attorney-General; where preliminary investigation suggests that a prosecution under those Acts might have to be considered, the Director of Public Prosecutions is consulted over the method of investigation. In 1982 one member of my Department's staff was prosecuted for such offences; in 1983 two; in 1984 none; in 1985 eight and in 1986 none. Two of those persons were convicted and nine acquitted.

NATO Submarine Operational Policy

30. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations seeking a change in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation submarine operational policy he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: No such representations have been received.

French Defence Minister

32. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Paris and discussions with the French Defence Minister.

38. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what matters he discussed at his meeting with the French Defence Minister; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) earlier today.

NATO Defence Strategy

34. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to meet the United States Secretary of State for Defence to discuss North Atlantic Treaty Organisation defence strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) earlier today.

BAOR

35. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to visit the British Army of the Rhine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that my right hon. Friend hopes to visit the British Army of the Rhine later this year.

"Keeping the Peace" (Video)

36. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Defence in how many schools his Department's recent video film, "Keeping the Peace", has been shown.

Mr. Stanley: As at 20 March, 461 schools had requested and had been, or will be, sent copies of the Ministry of Defence film "Keeping the Peace".

It is not known how many other educational establishments will have received the film through other channels, such as organisations interested in defence matters.

42. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received calling for the withdrawal from circulation of the Ministry of Defence film "Keeping the Peace"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: As at 20 March 1987, the Department has received representations from 14 members of the public against the showing of the film "Keeping the Peace" in schools. By the same date requests for copies of the film had been received from 461 secondary schools, 65 colleges, 11 teachers centres, five polytechnics, and six universities. All such requests are being met.

Republic of Ireland

37. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's forces' relations with the forces of the Irish Republic.

Mr. Stanley: Relations between Her Majesty's armed forces and the forces of the Irish Republic are good. It is our wish to maintain and, whenever possible, improve these good relations to the mutual benefit of both forces.

Members of the Irish defence forces have attended training courses in the United Kingdom, and we hope they will continue to do so.

Subcontractors (Payments)

39. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to require prime contractors to pay subcontractors promptly.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Our policy is to encourage prime contractors to follow the Ministry's example and pay subcontractors promptly when their work has been satisfactorily completed. We cannot require them to do so.

Saudi Arabian Tornado Order

40. **Sir Edward Gardner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence following his visit to the British Aerospace factories at Warton and Preston, if he will make a statement on the progress of the Saudi Arabian Tornado order.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Progress on the Saudi Arabian order for Tornado and other aircraft is good. Last spring six Tornado IDS were delivered to the Royal Saudi air force, together with weapons, supporting equipment and spares, and this year more Tornados and the first two PC9 trainers have been delivered. The training programme for RSAF ground and air crew continues in Saudi Arabia and at RAF stations in the United Kingdom.

Strategic Defence Initiative

43. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed the implications for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation strategy of the strategic defence initiative with his United States counterpart; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence last met the United States Secretary of Defence in Washington on 17 February, when they discussed a variety of subjects of mutual defence interest.

Officers (Pensions)

44. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, and representatives of the Officers' Pensions Society; and what action has been taken by his Department as a result of that meeting.

Mr. Freeman: The meeting was arranged at the request of the chairman of the Officers' Pensions Society, Admiral Sir Peter White, GBE. It provided an opportunity for the society to discuss with me a number of issues associated with pensions awarded under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme which are of particular concern to members of the society. These discussions were helpful to mutual understanding of the problems and I am continuing to give consideration to points raised.

Royal Ordnance Factories

49. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the sale of the Royal Ordnance factories.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 16 March 1987, at column 376.

Military Police

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines currently exist concerning the conduct of the military police; and what changes are being considered.

Mr. Freeman: The conduct of members of the Royal Military Police is governed by legislation and by comprehensive and detailed guidelines laid down in the following publications:

a. The Army Act 1955
b. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
c. The Manual of Military Law 1972
d. Queens Regulations for the Army 1975
e. Provost Marshal (Army) Technical Instructions
f. Provost Marshal(Army) Administrative Instructions
g. Command Standing Operating Procedures
h. Unit Standing Orders

There are no specific changes currently under consideration, but changes are made from time to time as a consequence of the introduction of new legislation and as a result of Provost Marshal's (Army) continuous internal management audit procedures and theatre-formation commanders' orders and instructions.

Short Take-off and Vertical Landing Project

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress on the advanced short take-off and vertical landing project.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom and United States Governments are engaged in a bilateral programme of studies into propulsion and control technologies for a possible advanced short take-off and landing (ASTOVL) aircraft. The programme, which is expected to last for some five years, involves research establishments and industry in both countries. The main objective of this programme of work is to develp the necessary technologies up to a point where a decision on a joint flight demonstrator programme could be taken with confidence. Satisfactory progress is being maintained.

Horseshoe Barracks, Shoeburyness

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his future plans for the Horseshoe barracks in Shoeburyness.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that the studies for the possible future use of Horseshoe barracks in Shoeburyness are taking longer than expected, and at this stage I cannot confirm when a decision will be made. I shall write to my hon. Friend when the outcome is known.

Royal Marines

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about morale in, and current levels of recruitment to, the Royal Marines.

Mr. Freeman: Morale in the Royal Marines remains high. The levels of recruitment for the last two years have been:

	Officers	*Other Ranks*
1985-86	63	913
1986-87	63	976

The ratio of applicants to places (officers and other ranks) is about 3:1.

Departmental Publications

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list each publication produced by his Department for public distribution since 1979, together with the date of publication, the print-run, the total cost, the number distributed, the method of distribution, the subject covered and the target-group.

Mr. Stanley: This information cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total budget allocated for the production of the leaflet "20 Questions on Defence"; if he will provide a breakdown of the budget; how many leaflets will be printed; how they will be distributed; and towards whom they are directed.

Mr. Stanley: The total budget for the design, artwork and printing of 11,000 copies of the leaflet was £2,700, shared equally between the Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. A further 5,000 copies have been ordered at a total cost of £560, shared equally between the two Departments. The leaflet is intended to help to explain aspects of British defence and arms control policies to Members of both Houses, British Members of the European Parliament, members of the general public, and interested groups in other countries. Copies have been sent to all MPs and British MEPs, a number of peers, regular recipients of Foreign and Commonwealth Office publications on defence and disarmament issues, and British embassies and high commissions. It is intended to issue the remainder in response to specific requests or expressions of interest in the subjects covered in the leaflets.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 25 March 1987

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal to discuss the markets for coal.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have regular meetings with the chairman of the British Coal Corporation to discuss all aspects of the coal industry, including the markets for coal.

NATO (Petroleum Planning Committee)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make the minutes of the meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation petroleum planning committee available in the Library.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: No.

North-West

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to discuss the north-west's future energy requirements with business and local authority leaders.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government's approach to energy takes full account of the requirements of the regions. Ministers often meet business and local authority leaders in the north-west to discuss energy issues of mutual concern.

Cash Limits

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits for 1986-87.

Mr. Peter Walker: The new cash limit for class VI, vote 2 is £266·102 million. The change arises partly from the transfer of £1·0 million to the Department of the Environment as a special contribution towards additional costs in this financial year of the homes insulation scheme.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Programme

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will give the outturn figures for the gross aid programme of each of the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, together with the estimated figure for 1986-87; and what proportion of gross national product these figures represent;

(2) if he will give the percentage of the gross aid programme in each of the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, together with estimates for 1986-87, spent on *(a)* multilateral aid, *(b)* bilateral country programmes including budgetary aid and aid and trade provision and *(c)* other bilateral aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	Gross aid programme	*Percentage of GNP at market prices*	*Multilateral*	*Country programmes*	*Other*
	(£ million)		*(percentage)*	*(percentage)*	*(percentage)*
1978-79	764	0·44	27	61	12
1979-80	834	0·40	29	57	14
1980-81	968	0·41	29	58	13
1981-82	1,016	0·39	38	49	13
1982-83	1,033	0·36	42	46	12
1983-84	1,100	0·36	46	40	14
1984-85	1,165	0·35	43	42	15
1985-86	1,193	0·33	42	43	15
1986-87	1,266	0·33	41	45	14

Figures for 1986-87 are estimates based on provision in the Spring Supplementary Estimates for the Overseas Aid Vote; the GNP for 1986-87 has been estimated from information in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1987-88".

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the amounts of aid disbursed as *(a)* project aid, *(b)* programme aid, *(c)* technical co-operation, *(d)* budgetary aid and *(e)* aid and trade provision for each of the years 1978-79 to 1985-86, together with estimates for 1986-87.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

(£ million)

	Project aid	*Programme aid*	*Technical co-operation*	*Budgetary aid*	*Aid and trade provision*
1978-79	195	153	171	15	12
1979-80	186	120	212	9	29
1980-81	325	67	220	9	26
1981-82	239	71	218	9	53

	Project aid	Programme aid	Technical co-operation	Budgetary aid	Aid and trade provision
1982-83	225	61	218	10	47
1983-84	217	48	244	12	28
1984-85	239	36	276	10	59
1985-86	248	53	302	9	36
1986-87	215	79	304	8	90

Figures for 1986-87 are provisional estimates.

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of technical co-operation aid in the years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 estimated was devoted to *(a)* the provision of experts, wholly or partly financed, *(b)* training and *(c)* other forms of assistance.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

	1984-85 per cent.	1985-86 per cent.
Experts	32	31
Training	21	20
Other	47	49

"Experts" includes consultancies and "training" includes Commonwealth scholarships and fellowships.

Planning allocations are not based on categories of technical co-operation, so an analysis for 1986-87 will be available only after the accounts have been completed.

DEFENCE

Soviet Defence Minister

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to meet the Soviet Defence Minister to discuss European security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

RAF Molesworth

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many United States Air Force personnel are currently stationed at Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 6 March, at column 734.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to make a statement to the House before Molesworth becomes operational.

Mr. Stanley: Further information will be given about RAF Molesworth as appropriate and subject to the constraints of security.

United States Forces

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *291*, to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, if he will list any further military construction projects at installations in the United Kingdom used by United States forces on which construction work is due to start in the United States fiscal year 1988, dependent on approval by the United States Congress.

Mr. Stanley: I understand from the United States authorities that since my reply to the hon. Member on 11 February the only additions to the list of military construction projects at installations used by the United States forces in the United Kingdom that are due to be started in FY 1988 are a youth centre and automotive hobby shop at RAF Greenham Common.

THE ARTS

National Gallery

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Minister for the Arts what progress is being made on the planned extension to the National Gallery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The trustees of the National Gallery announced in April 1985 that, thanks to the generosity of the Sainsbury family, a new extension would be built on the Hampton site to the west of the main gallery building. Last year the trustees chose Mr. Robert Venturi to design the new extension. I understand that his designs will be put on public display at the National Gallery from Wednesday 15 April.

We have been in discussion with the trustees and donors about the future use and maintenance of the new extension. I have placed in the Library copies of my letter of 16 March to Sir John Sainsbury which records our joint understanding on this.

The new extension is a very significant development for our national museums and galleries and demonstrates what can be achieved in partnership between enlightened benefactors and a national institution. The Government are deeply indebted to the Sainsbury brothers for their magnificent generosity and commitment to the arts. I am particularly delighted therefore that the new extension is to bear their family name.

TRANSPORT

Unleaded Petrol (M1)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that service stations on the M1 between London and Wakefield should be contractually obliged to serve unleaded petrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The terms of the current leases for motorway service areas do not entitle us to impose a requirement of this kind.

Unleaded petrol is already on sale at three service areas — Rothersthorpe on M1, Killington Lake on M6 and South Mimms on M25. We intend to remind operators at other areas (and through them, the firms providing fuel) of the tax differential announced in the budget. We will encourage them to make early provision of lead-free petrol.

North Sea Operations (Helicopter Cover)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what emergency helicopter cover is available for offshore production platforms, semi-submersible rigs and safety vessels in the event of accident.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There are presently 12 helicopter bases around the United Kingdom declared for search and rescue which are available for accidents involving offshore oil platforms and support craft. There are nine at RAF bases at Lossiemouth, Leuchars, Boulmer, Leconfield, Coltishall, Manston, Chivenor, Brawdy and Valley; two at RN bases at Lee-on-Solent and Culdrose and one civil helicopter at Sumburgh, Shetland Isles, on contract to the Department of Transport. One further civil contract helicopter is soon to be provided for north west Scotland. Three SAR helicopter flights are also maintained by oil companies on the North sea fields as part of their commitment to the safety of their installations, personnel and support craft.

In addition, there are RN anti-submarine Sea King helicopters at Culdross and Prestwick, United States air force long-range helicopters at Woodbridge, Suffolk and other aircraft which may be made available for SAR operations. Support can also be expected from foreign SAR helicopter resources in Norway, Denmark, France, Belgium and the Irish Republic.

A1-M1 Link Road

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce a decision on the A1-M1 link road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport expect to announce their joint decision before the Easter recess.

Roll-on/Roll-off Ferries (Safety)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what detailed response he has given to the National Union of Seamen in answer to its 10 proposals for improving the safety of roll-on/roll-off ferries in the light of the Zeebrugge disaster.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend is carefully considering the various points raised by the National Union of Seamen. He will be answering its letter shortly.

Airships (Noise)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken to reduce the level of noise from airships overflying London.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Following representations that were made to me last year by my hon. Friend and others, my Department held urgent discussions with Airship Industries, which, I know, is anxious to ensure that the operation of its airships is acceptable environmentally. During the winter modifications have been introduced which makes the airship quieter. Further improvement is possible but it will take time. It has, therefore, agreed, as an interim measure, to introduce a number of operational noise reduction procedures while the research and development is proceeding. These procedures will result in very significant reductions in ground noise levels. I understand that the Goodyear airship will not be returning this year.

Central Reservation Safety Fences

Sir George Young asked the Secretary of State for Transport what efforts have been made to ensure that the design and performance of central reserve safety fences are satisfactory; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Current designs of safety fences were established from extensive research, including full-scale impact testing. Designs are required to contain a 1·5 tonne vehicle travelling at 70 mph and striking the fence at an angle of 20 deg and to redirect it safely, ideally keeping the forces experienced by vehicle occupants as low as possible. Such designs cope most effectively with impacts from cars, the most likely vehicles to collide with safety fences.

The Department has a continuing programme of research that may lead to new designs in the future that can cope with a wider range of vehicles at justifiable cost. Recent results from one element of our research programme demonstrated the effectiveness of safety fences in reducing the severity of accidents, and showed that more central reserve safety fences would be justified on dual carriageway roads.

Consequently, changes to the Department's standard for safety fences were announced on 17 December 1986 that will substantially increase the level of their provision on dual carriageway trunk roads. They will now be provided on all new roads and gradually on the vast majority of existing roads. We estimate that this will lead to a saving of over 1,000 casualties per annum. I am also writing to my hon. Friend.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Capital Allocations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 6 March, *Official Report*, column *706*, concerning a formula used in determining capital allocations, if he will publish a table showing, for each recent year, the amount and proportion of capital allocations determined by that formula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No. It is not the Department's practice to publish the elements which comprise its block allocations to local education authorities in respect of prescribed capital expenditure.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the pupil-teacher ratios for primary and secondary schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in England in January 1986 were 22·1 to 1 and 15·9 to 1 respectively. The corresponding figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Substandard Primary School Places

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a table showing, for each non-metropolitan county education authority that replied to both of his Department's circular letters dated 5 February 1982 and 30 June 1986 with information of substandard primary school places *(a)* the proportion of such places in 1982, expressed as a percentage of the number of primary schoolchildren in maintained and voluntary schools at that time, *(b)* the proportion of such places in 1986, expressed as a percentage of the number of primary schoolchildren in maintained and voluntary schools at that time and *(c)* the figure by which the change between *(a)* and *(b)* differs from the percentage change between the total figures for all such authorities providing this information; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing, for each metropolitan district education authority outside Greater London that replied to both of his Department's circular letters dated 5 February 1982 and 30 June 1986 with information of substandard primary school places *(a)* the proportion of such places in 1982, expressed as a percentage of the number of primary schoolchildren in maintained and voluntary schools at that time, *(b)* the proportion of such places in 1986, expressed as a percentage of the number of primary schoolchildren in maintained and voluntary schools at that time and *(c)* the figure by which the change between *(a)* and *(b)* differs from the percentage change between the total figures for all such authorities providing this information; and if he will make a statement.

(3) if he will publish a table showing, for each local education authority in Greater London that replied to both of his Department's circular letters dated 5 February 1982 and 30 June 1986 with information of substandard primary school places *(a)* the proportion of such places in 1982, expressed as a percentage of the number of primary schoolchildren in maintained and voluntary schools at that time, *(b)* the proportion of such places in 1986, expressed as a percentage of the number of primary schoolchildren in maintained and voluntary schools at that time and *(c)* the figure by which the change between *(a)* and *(b)* differs from the percentage change between the total figures for all such authorities providing this information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Further Education (Statistics)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of school leavers with five or more higher grade O-level-CSE passes in each local education authority stayed on in full-time education after the minimum school-leaving age.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Information is not available in the form requested. The proportions of maintained school leavers in England with five or more higher grades at O-level-CSE who had either stayed on at school or who had left at the minimum school leaving age, intending to continue full-time education elsewhere, are as follows. The percentages do not include those pupils who left school without five or more higher grade O-level-CSE passes and subsequently achieved this level of qualification, but do include those who achieved this level of qualification at least in part in the sixth form.

Leavers from maintained schools in England with five or more higher grade[1] results at O-level or CSE.
Total of leavers aged 15[2] who intended to pursue full-time courses of further education and leavers aged 16 or over[2] as a percentage of all leavers with five or more higher[1] grade results at O-level or CSE.
Data averaged over the academic years 1982-83 to 1984-85.

	Per cent.
Barking	80·0
Barnet	93·9
Bexley	88·3
Brent	96·6
Bromley	88·5
Croydon	91·3
Ealing	92·5
Enfield	89·2
Haringey	89·5
Harrow	93·8
Havering	87·5
Hillingdon	89·9
Hounslow	90·2
Kingston-upon-Thames	93·4
Merton	93·2
Newham	85·7
Redbridge	87·8
Richmond-upon-Thames	92·8
Sutton	90·4
Waltham Forest	95·6
Ilea	91·0
Birmingham	85·8
Coventry	85·6
Dudley	80·7
Sandwell	81·7
Solihull	89·2
Walsall	87·2
Wolverhampton	86·0
Knowsley	82·5
Liverpool	90·9
St. Helens	80·7
Sefton	89·7
Wirral	88·1
Bolton	83·0
Bury	84·3
Manchester	89·8
Oldham	78·3
Rochdale	78·1
Salford	79·9
Stockport	84·1
Tameside	77·2
Trafford	80·2
Wigan	81·4
Barnsley	83·3
Doncaster	86·7
Rotherham	78·2
Sheffield	87·2
Bradford	90·4
Calderdale	91·1
Kirklees	89·5
Leeds	86·9
Wakefield	83·7
Gateshead	85·8
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	90·3
North Tyneside	87·7
South Tyneside	89·9
Sunderland	81·4
Avon	86·0
Bedfordshire	85·8

	Per cent.
Berkshire	89·1
Buckinghamshire	91·1
Cambridgeshire	88·1
Cheshire	87·7
Cleveland	83·2
Cornwall	93·7
Cumbria	81·0
Derbyshire	84·5
Devon	87·4
Dorset	89·0
Durham	86·3
East Sussex	90·1
Essex	85·7
Gloucestershire	86·5
Hampshire	89·2
Hereford and Worcester	88·6
Hertfordshire	92·0
Humberside	84·9
Isle of Wight	96·5
Kent	92·6
Lancashire	82·4
Leicestershire	91·6
Lincolnshire	89·7
Norfolk	86·7
North Yorkshire	90·9
Northamptonshire	84·9
Northumberland	90·8
Nottinghamshire	85·2
Oxfordshire	89·7
Shropshire	89·0
Somerset	85·4
Staffordshire	83·3
Suffolk	83·4
Surrey	92·3
Warwickshire	87·8
West Sussex	92·2
Wiltshire	87·6
Total England	87·7

[1] O-level grades A-C, CSE grade 1.
[2] Age at 31 August preceeding the academic year.
Source: School leavers survey. Data subject to sampling error.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the age participation rate or index for 16 to 19-year-olds in full-time education; and what information he has about comparable rates for each member state of the European Community, the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The available information for selected countries is shown in the following table for 16 to 18-year-olds. Rates for part-time students, including the youth training scheme, are also shown where they are available as they form an important element of United Kingdom further education.

Participation in education and training of 16 to 18-year-olds

	Full-time	Part-time[1]	All education and training
France (1981)	58	8	66
Germany (1981)	44	[2]40	84
Italy (1981)	48	18	65
Japan[3,4] (1981)	69	3	73
Netherlands (1981)	70	[2]8	79
United States of America[4] (1981)	79	—	79
Belgium (1982)	n.a.	n.a.	[5]73
Denmark (1980)	n.a.	n.a.	[5]72
Spain (1980)	n.a.	n.a.	[5]47
United Kingdom[6] (1981)	32	32	63
(1983)	31	32	64

n.a.—not available.
[1] Including apprenticeships, YTS and similar schemes.
[2] Including compulsory part-time education for the youngest leavers.
[3] Estimated; excluding some 18-year-olds in certain vocational training colleges.
[4] Including private sector higher education.
[5] Estimated; using OECD and SOEC data for individual ages.
[6] Excluding private sector full-time further education estimated at 2 per cent. for 16 to 18s. Includes some evening students, allowing for overlap with other types of study. Includes in 1981, YOP, (7 per cent.) and in 1983, YTS, (10 per cent.).

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish a list showing the percentage of pupils in each local education authority who *(a)* stay on to the sixth form and *(b)* continue full-time education at further education college.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The table shows the percentage of the population aged 16 in full-time education in each local education authority in England in 1985-86. It shows separately those in maintained schools and those in further education establishments.

Some 16 per cent. of 16-year-olds also study in FE colleges part-time during the day. Figures for part-time study for individual authorities were published by the Department in "Statistical Bulletin 9/86".

Percentage of the Population aged 16 in Full-Time Education in each Local Education Authority in England showing separately those in Schools and Further Education Colleges

	Academic Year 1985-86	
	Full-time and Sandwich in F.E.	Maintained Schools
Barking	13	20
Barnet	12	56
Bexley	17	32
Brent	15	46
Bromley	15	39
Croydon	19	31
Ealing	16	44
Enfield	15	36
Haringey	19	36
Harrow	15	56
Havering	15	28
Hillingdon	12	36
Hounslow	13	44
Kingston-upon-Thames	19	42
Merton	16	40
Newham	18	27
Redbridge	13	36
Richmond-upon-Thames	60	1
Sutton	16	39
Waltham Forest	14	34
OUTER LONDON BOROUGHS	16	37
Inner London	14	32
GREATER LONDON	16	35
Birmingham	18	26
Coventry	14	29
Dudley	29	14
Sandwell	18	18
Solihull	24	24
Walsall	12	26
Wolverhampton	22	23
Knowsley	18	16
Liverpool	12	28
St. Helens	19	24

	Academic Year 1985-86 Full-time and Sandwich in F.E.	Maintained Schools
Sefton	27	30
Wirral	17	31
Bolton	17	23
Bury	18	32
Manchester	14	30
Oldham	15	19
Rochdale	12	26
Salford	14	25
Stockport	17	29
Tameside	18	18
Trafford	27	17
Wigan	24	20
Barnsley	19	18
Doncaster	10	25
Rotherham	16	21
Sheffield	22	22
Bradford	10	31
Calderdale	16	26
Kirklees	19	27
Leeds	15	27
Wakefield	25	15
Gateshead	12	18
Newcastle upon Tyne	8	30
North Tyneside	16	30
South Tyneside	19	16
Sunderland	15	21
METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS	17	24
Avon	19	28
Bedfordshire	17	31
Berkshire	21	33
Buckinghamshire	19	35
Cambridgeshire	21	26
Cheshire	19	29
Cleveland	19	25
Cornwall (including Isles of Scilly)	27	28
Cumbria	17	24
Derbyshire	26	19
Devon	30	19
Dorset	20	24
Durham	18	20
East Sussex	19	35
Essex	16	27
Gloucestershire	16	28
Hampshire	28	24
Hereford and Worcester	21	27
Hertfordshire	21	34
Humberside	15	24
Isle of Wight	20	27
Kent	19	30
Lancashire	28	14
Leicestershire	15	32
Lincolnshire	26	21
Norfolk	21	21
North Yorkshire	21	32
Northamptonshire	17	26
Northumberland	17	29
Nottinghamshire	16	21
Oxfordshire	20	32
Salop	19	28
Somerset	35	16
Staffordshire	20	22
Suffolk	11	27
Surrey	16	44
Warwickshire	27	25
West Sussex	15	37
Wiltshire	30	19
NON-METROPOLITAN COUNTIES	21	26
ENGLAND	19	27

Research Councils

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, in view of last month's university pay award, he will now increase the funds available to the research councils so that they can maintain their existing level of project support.

Mr. Walden: The university pay award is a generous one which will benefit the research councils by helping to encourage our best university scientists to continue to work in this country rather than go abroad. It is for the research councils to decide how best to manage their priorities. We are discussing with them the implications of absorbing the cost of the pay increase. The additional cost to the research councils in 1987-88 of the academic pay settlement is estimated to be £15 million out of a total science budget of around £660 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Stephen Bogle (Death)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what inquiries he has conducted into the death of Stephen Bogle at Thames magistrates' court on 12 August 1986; and what action he intends to take;

(2) whether there will be an inquiry into the death of Stephen Bogle at Thames magistrates' court on 12 August 1986 by *(a)* the police or *(b)* the prison medical service.

Mr. Mellor: A review of Mr. Bogle's treatment in prison custody prior to his death has been carried out. This has shown that he received appropriate medical treatment during that time. The question whether there was any misconduct by police officers is under investigation by the Metropolitan police following the receipt of a complaint about this case. The investigation is being supervised by the Police Complaints Authority.

Extradition

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been made by foreign Governments to the United Kingdom to extradite their nationals for each of the last five years; how many of these have been granted; and if he will provide a breakdown by country.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the nationality of fugitives is not readily available. The table therefore gives the numbers of applications from foreign countries (that is other than Commonwealth countries and the Republic of Ireland) by year of request in respect of all nationalities for the years 1982 to 1986. Requests to trace fugitives and requests for provisional arrest which were not followed by formal requisitions have not been included.

Extradition requests to the United Kingdom made by foreign countries 1982 to 1986

Country	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted
Austria	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Belgium	—	—	2	1	1	1	1	—	—	—
Denmark	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Finland	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
France	1	—	2	1	2	1	6	3	2	1
Federal Republic of Germany	5	2	3	2	11	8	5	5	9	5
Greece	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—	—	—
Iraq	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Israel	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1
Italy	3	—	3	1	7	4	5	2	9	2
Liberia	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Luxembourg	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	—	—	—	—	3	1	2	2	2	2
Norway	—	—	1	1	5	3	—	—	—	—
Portugal	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Sweden	4	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	—	—
Switzerland	2	1	2	2	—	—	2	—	1	—
Thailand	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
United States of America	8	8	7	5	4	2	12	10	15	9
TOTAL	25	14	27	14	38	23	40	23	40	21

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been made for the extradition of British citizens abroad, for each of the last five years; how many were granted; and if he will break down the figures on a country basis.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the following table and does not distinguish between extradition requests made for British and those made for non-British citizens. The table (which covers requests made to both foreign and Commonwealth Governments but not the Republic of Ireland) gives the total number of requests made in the period 1982 to 1986. Requests granted in a year later than that in which the requests were made are given by year of request. Some of the requests are still pending. Requests granted include cases where the fugitive returned voluntarily.

Extradition requests made by the United Kingdom 1982 to 1986

Country	1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted	Requests made	Requests granted
Australia	—	—	—	—	4	4	1	0	—	—
Austria	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Belguim	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	1	2	2
Bermuda	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Canada	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	0
Columbia	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0	—	—
Denmark	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
France	3	2	1	1	5	4	—	—	5	1
Federal Republic of Germany	2	2	2	2	4	4	1	1	1	1
Gibraltar	—	—	1	0	1	0	2	1	3	1
Grenada	1	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
India	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	0	—	—
Israel	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jamaica	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mexico	—	—	1	0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Malaysia	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	1	1	—	—	7	2	4	2	3	3
New Zealand	—	—	1	0	—	—	1	0	2	0
Nigeria	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
Pakistan	—	—	—	—	3	0	—	—	—	—
Portugal	1	1	1	1	—	—	1	0	1	0
Sri Lanka	1	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sweden	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Switzerland	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
United States of America	4	2	5	3	4	4	7	5	4	2
Zimbabwe	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0	—	—

Electoral Register (Lone Women)

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in order to provide protection for women living on their own, he will amend the Representation of the People Regulations 1986 so that initials instead of forenames are entered on the electoral register.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Such a change would require fresh primary legislation and we are not persuaded that it should be made. The use of forenames is necessary to reduce the risk of personation and to assist staff at polling stations in identifying voters.

Mr. W. John Fleming (Extradition)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to secure the extradition from the United States of America of Mr. W. John Fleming; if he will estimate the cost to public funds of the efforts made so far; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No request has been made to the United States for the extradition of Mr. Fleming.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places have been allocated under the community programme for crime prevention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As at 28 February 1987 there were 8,294 places allocated under the community programme for crime prevention on a total of 279 projects providing a range of services such as household security, youth activities, and crime prevention education and publicity.

United States Citizens (Prison Sentences)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there are any arrangements for citizens of the United States, whether adult or juvenile, convicted of criminal offences in the United Kingdom to serve any custodial sentence imposed in the United States of America.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. Provision is made for such arrangements in the Council of Europe convention on the transfer of sentenced persons, to which both the United Kingdom and the United States of America are parties.

Mr. V. Dajibhai and Mr. A. Sharif

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will cause to be published the reports of the Avon and Somerset constabulary into the death in August 1986 of Vimal Dajibhai and the death in October 1986 of Ashad Sharif.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The publication of the police report following an investigation is a matter for the chief officer. It is not the normal practice to publish material other than that submitted in evidence; to do so would discourage members of the public from co-operating fully with the police.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Hurd: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 24 March by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to her question on the compulsory provision of information about ethnic origin.

As I stated in my reply to the hon. Member on 9 March, of the 3,065 new entrants to the Home Office between 1 October 1985 and 25 February 1987, 1,191 (nearly 39 per cent.) had not returned a completed questionnaire on ethnic origin by the time the figures were collated. It is not possible to say how many have responded, or will respond, at a later date.

Crime and Unemployment

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage increase in the various types of crime since 1979 in London, the inner cities and in the rest of the country, together with such information as he has available concerning any relationship between crime and the rate of unemployment.

Mr. Mellor: Numbers of notifiable offences recorded in police force areas are published each year in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", and most recently for 1986 in a Home Office "Statistical Bulletin" issue number 4/87 (table 6). Numbers of offences recorded in each London borough in 1978 and 1980 are published in table 147 of "1983-84 Annual Abstract of Greater London Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library. More recent figures for London boroughs are also placed regularly in the Library.

Research has not shown significant associations between increases in recorded crime and increases in unemployment. The article "Unemployment and Crime" in the Home Office "Research and Planning Research Bulletin No. 14," reviewed research evidence on the association between unemployment and crime and concluded that little could be learnt from studies of this topic at aggregate level.

Bail

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will now undertake a review of the workings of the Bail Act 1976 and report his conclusions to the House.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the operation of the Bail Act 1976 was last reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The use of bail is regularly reviewed, and the information is published each year in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". We are now looking into the events which led to the grant of bail to Winston Silcott. In the light of that information, we will consider whether there are any lessons to be learnt, and will report our conclusions to the House.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the law so that persons accused of *(a)* murder and *(b)* rape may not be granted bail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to a reply given to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 24 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last five years persons on bail, to which police had objected, have committed offences; in how many cases the offence was *(a)* murder and *(b)* rape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in the last two years have been convicted of crimes whilst on bail; and, of those, how many were on bail following murder charges.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Video Monitors

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to amend the law relating to the licensing of television screens used solely as video monitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no reason to believe that the present licensing requirements need amendment in this respect.

Murder Statistics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the percentage increase in non-domestic murders in each of the last five years;

(2) what proportion of people convicted of murder in each of the last five years have committed their offences in domestic circumstances.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information relates to homicide and is published in table 4.4 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1985" (Cm. 10).

Police Act 1964

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases, in each of the past seven years, damages have been paid after judgment under section 48(2)*(a)* of the Police Act 1964; what has been the average settlement figure for each year; and what was the average damages awarded.

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 March 1987, c. *470*]: The information in respect of police forces other than the Metropolitan police is not available centrally. For the Metropolitan police I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information is as follows:

Year	*Number of cases in which damages were awarded*	*Average amount of damages* £	*Average out of court settlement* £
1980	4	1,224	—
1981	7	2,099	—
1982	9	7,071	1,013
1983	5	571	1,853
1984	7	2,231	—
1985	7	1,993	3,456
1986	10	4,684	6,353

The numbers of cases settled out of court in 1980, 1981 and 1984 are not readily available and the average out of court settlement cannot therefore be calculated. The totals of out of court settlements for these years, however, were £3,397, £10,585 and £162,986 respectively.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authorities (European Regional Development Fund)

70. **Mrs. Peacock** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to alter the arrangements under which a local authority area which is eligible for an allocation of finance under the non-quota textile measure and which receives a grant from the European regional development fund, is permitted no corresponding increase in its capital allocation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Capital allocations for local authorities take account of the expected receipts from the European regional development fund and are higher, therefore, than they would otherwise have been. There are no plans to change this system.

Housing Improvement Programme

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in a single table the housing improvement programme allocations for the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Newham, respectively, for each of the years 1980-81 to 1987-88, together with their equivalent in 1987 prices, and their respective index on the base of 1980-81.

Mr. Tracey: For Southwark and Tower Hamlets I refer the hon. Member to the answers given, respectively, to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 17 March, at column 434, and to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on 23 February, at columns 90-91. The information requested for Newham is given in the following table, together with corresponding information about the authority's capital expenditure on housing. The latter reflects the use that it has been able to make of the various sources of capital spending power available to it including, since 1981-82, its receipts from the sale of assets.

Newham
Cash 1980-86 prices

			Index
	HIP allocations		
1980-81	25·756	36·097	100
1981-82	15·482	19·250	55
1982-83	22·162	26·365	73
1983-84	20·361	23·182	64
1984-85	23·310	25·451	71
1985-86	21·574	22·221	62
1986-87	21·699	21·699	60
1987-88	17·574	16·939	50
	Capital expenditure		
1980-81	27·424	38·435	100
1981-82	16·056	20·482	53
1982-83	17·693	21·049	55
1983-84	33·238	37·843	98
1984-85	40·979	44·742	116
1985-86	28·849	29·715	77
1986-87[1]	44·224	44·224	115

[1] Estimated by the authority.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the compulsory purchase orders proposed by the London Docklands Development

Corporation, stating for each the name, number of properties affected, date of inquiry held or proposed and date of confirmation, if made.

Mr. John Patten: The London Docklands Development Corporation has made, or resolved to make, the compulsory purchase orders shown in the table.

The number of properties affected for each CPO is not available. But the nearest approximation, the number of land parcels, is given instead.

The dates of public inquiries already held are also shown. No firm dates are yet available for forthcoming public inquiries.

Title	*Date of Public Inquiry held*	*Date of decision by Secretary of State*	*Total number of Land Parcels*
Limehouse Link	—	—	81
Poplar By-Pass	—	—	74
Garford Street	—	—	4
Abbey Scaffolding	—	—	1
East India Dock Link	—	—	76
East Docklands No. 2	—	—	35
Lower Lea Crossing	—	—	[1]60
East Docklands No. 1	January-March 1986	—	919
E.G.A.R.	August 1985	February 1986	20
North Albert Road	—	—	36
Connaught Road	—	—	26
Westferry Road	—	—	16
Westferry Circus/Roundabout	—	—	35
Klein's Wharf	November 1986	—	1
Cannon Workshops	—	—	1
North of Marsh Wall	—	—	5
Shed 35 Link	—	—	2
Billingsgate/Prestons Road	—	—	4
Isthmus	—	—	5
Heron Quay	—	—	7
Prestons Road Widening	—	—	32
95 Prestons Road and 51 Coldharbour	December 1986	—	2
Brunswick Wharf	—	—	1
Naval Row	—	—	8
Isthmus 2	—	—	1
Phase 6	May 1986	November 1986	46
East Country Yard	December 1986	—	3
Johnsons Draw Dock	—	August 1985	1
Shed 35 No. 2	—	—	2
East India Dock Road/Woolmore Street	—	—	32

[1] Approximate

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing units built on London Docklands Development Corporation-owned land between July 1981 and December 1986 have been sold to present or former employees of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not collected.

Local Authorities (Housing Defects)

Mr. Hicks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has allocated all the £14 million specifically designed to assist local authorities with exceptional problems in meeting their obligations under the provisions of the Housing Defects Act; and if he will state the amount requested by the borough of Restormel and the amount granted.

Mr. John Patten: Applications for additional allocations are now being considered. Authorities were not required to bid for a specific amount of resources, and Restormel did not do so.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent by the London Docklands Development Corporation on publicity for the Canary wharf development.

Mr. John Patten: The London Docklands Development Corporation has spent nothing on publicity for the proposed Canary wharf development, other than on statutory advertisements required by the planning application procedures.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the content of the master builder agreement, to be signed by the London Docklands Development Corporation and the Canary wharf developers, is to be made public.

Mr. John Patten: The proposed master building agreement for Canary wharf is a commercially confidential document and will not therefore be made available to the public. But the main features of any agreed proposals would be made public.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what public consultation has been carried out with regard to the master builder agreement soon to

be signed by the London Docklands Development Corporation and the consortia of developers for Canary wharf.

Mr. John Patten: There has been no public consultation on the terms of the proposed Canary wharf master building agreement, which is a commercial document. The public and a wide range of organisations have, however, been involved in a series of presentations and discussions about the overall scheme.

Housing Investment Programme

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the housing investment programme allocation in 1979 prices to the London borough of Southwark for each year since 1979.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 17 March at column 434, to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The figures given there can be converted to 1979 prices by using the gross domestic produce deflator at market prices in the annual supplement to the Central Statistical Office publication, *Economic Trends*, which is in the Library.

Pura Foods (Docklands)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what efforts have been made by the London Docklands Development Corporation to assist Pura Foods to stay at its present location and make use of the river.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1984 the London Docklands Development Corporation has given seven planning permissions to Pura Foods for extensions and improvements to its premises, and is currently considering two further planning applications for development, including a proposed new jetty.

J. J. Prior Ltd. (Docklands)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what alternative use for the J. J. Prior site the London Docklands Development Corporation has planned; what alternative riverside sites have been offered to the firm; if the London Docklands Development Corporation intends to purchase compulsorily the land occupied by J. J. Prior, an aggregate firm on the River Lea; and how many people are employed by J. J. Prior Ltd.

Mr. John Patten: Approximately 30 people are employed by J. J. Prior on this site, which is affected by proposals for a new roundabout at the junction of two major new roads. The LDDC has therefore resolved to acquire the site compulsorily, but its policy is to retain existing local firms within its area wherever possible or to find an alternative site providing the same, or better, facilities. Accordingly, the LDDC is discussing alternative riverside locations with the company.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek from the water authorities information on the expenditure incurred by the *(a)* Thames water authority, *(b)* Yorkshire water authority and *(c)* Trent water authority for all work undertaken in preparation for privatisation.

Mr. John Patten: No.

New Towns

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline future initiatives planned for the residents of new towns.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have proposed target dates by which we expect the new town development corporations substantially to have completed their tasks. We hope then to be able to wind them up. We shall give residents of the towns who are tenants of the corporations or the Commission for the New Towns an opportunity to express their own preferences about the future ownership of their homes. Other Government initiatives will benefit new towns residents in the same way as they benefit our other citizens.

Under-used Land

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to extend the identification for under-used publicly owned land to land which is under-used and privately owned.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Rate Support Grant, Devon

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of rate support grant paid to each district council in Devon in each of the last five years.

Mr. Chope: The figures requested are as follows:

District Councils in Devon, rate support grant

	1982-83 £ million	*1983-84* £ million	*1984-85* £ million	*1985-86* £ million	*1986-87* £ million
East Devon	4·022	4·105	4·025	3·864	4·282
Exeter	3·603	3·692	3·799	3·860	4·971
North Devon	2·756	2·826	2·806	2·666	2·952
Plymouth	9·846	9·921	9·913	10·101	12·305
South Hams	2·745	2·858	2·820	2·686	2·857
Teignbridge	3·656	3·778	3·713	3·515	3·834
Mid Devon	1·904	2·015	1·854	1·786	1·931
Torbay	4·463	4·667	4·651	4·778	4·968
Torridge	2·023	2·083	2·065	1·992	2·147
West Devon	1·307	1·457	1·428	1·376	1·481

Note:
The figures for 1982-83 are final entitlements. Domestic rate relief grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are final entitlements; those for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are first estimates. Block grant figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are entitlements after holdback based upon provisional outturn; those for 1985-86 are entitlements after holdback based on budgets; those for 1986-87 are entitlements based on initial budget returns.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what number of inner city properties he estimates will remain derelict should his Department discontinue the rule that the disposal of local authority housing should be at outstanding loan debt or market value, whichever is less;

(2) whether housing association grant will be available in relation to vacant properties which local authorities dispose of at discounted market value;

(3) if he has any plans to change the rule that the disposal of local authority properties to housing associations should be at outstanding loan debt or market value, whichever is less.

Mr. John Patten: The arrangements for transferring vacant local authority housing to housing associations are still being considered in the light of the responses to the Departments' consultation paper of 11 September 1986 on the general consents for the disposal of council houses and land.

Lord Dowding

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is intended to erect a statue to the memory of the late Air Chief Marshal, Lord Dowding, for his leading contribution in the Battle of Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987]: It has been the policy of successive Governments since 1956 not to sponsor further memorials to leaders of the second world war. However, if sufficient public support is forthcoming, my right hon. Friend will consider sympathetically any application for this consent under the Public Statues (Metropolis) Act.

WALES

Venous Leg Ulcers

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of treating venous leg ulcers in Wales in 1986.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not available centrally.

Pensioners (Hearing)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of retirement pensioners who have a hearing loss so great that they should benefit from the use of a hearing aid.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available centrally.

NHS Hearing Aids

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on follow-up help for those given National Health Service hearing aids.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Recipients of NHS hearing aids are entitled to replacement batteries and all repairs and servicing of those aids free of charge. The extent to which further follow-up help is provided is a matter for determination by individual district health authorities, in the light of perceived needs and priorities.

Audiological Technicians

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number and location of audiological technicians in the National Health Service in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information, which relates to 30 September 1986, is given in the following table:

Physiological measurement technicians: Audiology

Health authority	*Number*
Clwyd	9
East Dyfed	5
Gwent	7
Gwynedd	7
Mid Glamorgan	10
South Glamorgan	10
West Glamorgan	11

Blind and Partially Sighted People

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many (i) blind and (ii) partially sighted people there are in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: At 31 March 1986, local authority social services departments in Wales reported 8,362 people registered as blind and 5,240 registered as partially sighted.

Hearing Therapists

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many hearing therapists there are in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The required information is not available centrally.

Audiological Centres

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many specialised audiological centres there are in Wales; what is the waiting time for first appointments at each; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not available centrally.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent on regional development grants so far in 1986-87 and for each of the financial years since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Payments of regional development grants in Wales in each financial year since 1979 were as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	50·7
1980-81	103·5
1981-82	122·2
1982-83	121·5
1983-84	72·1
1984-85	92·7
1985-86	84·4
1986-87	[1]79·3

[1] To end February 1987.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the level of manufacturing investment in Wales in 1986; and what that level was in 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The latest available information on capital expenditure in manufacturing industry in Wales relates to 1985, when it was £563 million at current prices. The figure for 1979, also on a current price basis, was £472 million.

Class Size

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of classes and of pupils in classes of more than 30 pupils for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information on the number of classes of more than 30 pupils in the maintained primary and secondary schools sector is as follows:

	Number
1979	4,575
1980	4,100
1981	4,106
1982	3,715
1983	3,511
1984	3,477
1985	3,336

Information on the number of pupils in such classes is not available.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the pupil-teacher ratios for each local education authority for the most recent year for which figures are available, and for 1983 and for 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The overall pupil-teacher ratios in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools are given in the following table:

	January 1979	*January 1983*	*January 1986*
Clwyd	19·1	18·4	18·5
Dyfed	17·0	16·6	16·8
Gwent	18·6	18·0	17·6
Gwynedd	18·3	17·0	16·0
Mid Glamorgan	18·7	18·3	17·5
Powys	16·4	16·0	15·3
South Glamorgan	18·9	18·6	18·3
West Glamorgan	17·2	16·9	16·7

EMPLOYMENT

Small Unit Business Space

71. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General what representations the Government have received concerning the availability of affordable small unit business space for potential entrepreneurs.

Mr. Trippier: I have received correspondence on this subject from individuals drawing attention to the difficulties they have experienced in obtaining suitable premises available on terms they find satisfactory. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce recently carried out a survey which identified a shortage of premises of up to 1,500 sq ft in some parts of the country.

Hertfordshire (YTS)

Mr. Murphy asked the Paymaster General what is the most recent information about the destination of leavers from YTS schemes in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission's regular follow-up survey of YTS leavers shows that of those young people who left schemes in Hertfordshire between April and August 1986 84 per cent. were in employment; 3 per cent. were on a full-time course at a college or training centre; 4 per cent. were on another YTS scheme; 2 per cent. were doing something else; and 8 per cent. were unemployed some three months later.

Disabled People

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to tackle discrimination against disabled people seeking employment.

Mr. Lee: The Government are committed to helping people with disabilities realise their potential for employment. We are encouraging progressive policies among employers through the vigorous promotion of the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people, and providing direct financial assistance through Manpower Services Commission schemes to disabled people with problems finding or retaining a job.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many people were registered unemployed in Leicester in June 1979; and how many are currently registered unemployed.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 14 June 1979, there were 10,854 unemployed registrants in the Leicester jobcentre area. Comparable figures for February 1987 are not available because of changes in the way figures are collected and compiled. However, on 12 February 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the Leicester local authority district was 18,655.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for June 1979 and the latest available date, the number of male and female full-time and part-time workers on adult rates and the estimated average earnings in each case, and the number of full-time and part-time workers who were temporarily employed in each case; and

if he will also provide what estimate he is able to make of similar data for the self-employed and for workers on non-adult rates.

Mr. Lee: Such estimates as are possible are as follows:

Great Britain

	Numbers[1] employed *millions*	*Numbers[1] in temporary employment* *millions*	*Numbers[2] on adult[3] rates* *millions*	*Gross Average[2] earnings of those on adult rates* *£ per week*	*Numbers[2] not on adult[4] rates* *millions*	*Gross Average[2] earnings of those not on adult rates* *£ per week*
1979						
Males						
Full-time employees	13·2	—	11·9	101·4	1·2	35·2
Part-time employees				33·4		—
Self-employed	1·5	—	—	—	—	—
Full-time	1·4	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	0·1	—	—	—	—	—
Females						
Full-time employees	5·6	—	5·2	63·0	0·3	36·6
Part-time employees	3·9	—	3·7	27·5	..	—
Self-employed	0·3	—	—	—	—	—
Full-time	0·2	—	—	—	—	—
Part-time	0·1	—	—	—	—	—

— Data either not available or no reliable estimate possible.
.. Figures not significant at the level indicated.
[1] Relates to June 1979.
[2] Relates to April 1979.
[3] Males aged 21 and over. Females aged 18 and over.
[4] Males aged under 21. Females aged under 18.

Great Britain

	Numbers[1] employed *millions*	*Numbers[1] in temporary employment* *millions*	*Numbers[2] on adult rates* *millions*	*Gross average[2] earnings of those on adult rates* *£ per week*	*Numbers[2] not on adult rates* *millions*	*Gross average[2] earnings of those not on adult rates* *£ per week*
1986						
Males						
Full-time employees	10·8	0·2	10·4	207·5	0·4	87·4
Part-time employees	0·9	0·2	0·8	60·9	..	—
Self-employed	1·9	0·1	—	—	—	—
Full-time	1·8	0·1	—	—	—	—
Part-time	0·2	..	—	—	—	—
Females						
Full-time employees	5·3	0·2	5·1	137·2	0·2	78·0
Part-time employees	4·1	0·5	4·0	53·5	0·1	27·0
Self-employed	0·6	0·1	—	—	—	—
Full-time	0·3	..	—	—	—	—
Part-time	0·3	0·1	—	—	—	—

— Data either not available or no reliable estimate possible.
.. Figures not significant at the level indicated.
[1] Relates to June 1986.
[2] Relates to April 1986.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General, on the basis of information obtained from the labour force survey, how many people who were *(a)* self-employed and *(b)* employees had been continuously in that employment for (1) less than three months, (2) three months but less than six months, (3) six months but less than one year, (4) one year but less than two years, (5) two years but less than five years, (6) five years but less than 10 years, (7) 10 years but less than 20 years and (8) 20 years or more.

Mr. Lee: Estimates from the preliminary labour force survey results for the spring of 1986 of the length of time persons were either continuously self-employed or in employment as an employee with the same employer, in Great Britain, are as shown in the table.

Self-employed and Employees—length of time in continuous employment

Great Britain
thousands

Period	*Self-employed*	*Employees*
Less than 3 months	122	1,087
3 months but less than 6 months	91	889

Period	Self-employed	Employees
6 months but less than 1 year	186	1,772
1 year but less than 2 years	275	2,183
2 years but less than 5 years	561	4,107
5 years but less than 10 years	481	4,341
10 years but less than 20 years	551	4,288
20 years or more	450	2,009
All	[1]2,723	[1]20,705

[1] Includes those who did not state length of time in continuous employment.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what information he has from the general household survey about the economic status of self-employed persons 12 months before they were interviewed; and if he will show separately the proportions that were *(a)* unemployed, *(b)* employees, *(c)* on YOP/YTS and *(d)* economically inactive.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the exact form requested.

The latest available information from the general household survey is for 1984 when 8 per cent. of the self-employed persons in the sample said that 12 months earlier they had been an employee, and 6 per cent. said they had not been working or had been on YOP/YTS; the remaining 86 per cent. said they had been self-employed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Venous Leg Ulcers

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost of treating venous leg ulcers in Northern Ireland in 1986.

Mr. Needham: The expenditure of the health and social services boards is not analysed in such a way to enable the information requested to be separately identified.

Military Patrols

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the accompaniment of military patrols by Royal Ulster Constabulary officers.

Mr. Tom King: It has been for some years the policy of the Chief Constable, which I fully endorse, that wherever resources and circumstances permit, military patrols which are likely to come into contact with the public should be accompanied by RUC officers. This is a reflection of the policy established in 1976 and subsequently reinforced that the police are in the lead in the fight against terrorism, with the Army providing the essential military support.

I understand from the Chief Constable that in applying this policy his operational commanders take into account the function of the military patrol, the area in which it will operate, and the availability of police resources. Priority is therefore given to areas which the local commander knows to be sensitive, where contact with the public is particularly likely, and where a police presence is likely to be particularly helpful in preventing crime and enforcing the law.

I know that it is the Chief Constable's aim to develop and extend the policy wherever circumstances and resources allow.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Overseas Scholarships

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list scholarships awarded, and the numbers of students attending British universities, polytechnics and schools from each country in the Caribbean and central America by *(a)* Overseas Development Agency, *(b)* Foreign and Commonwealth Office and *(c)* British Council, including those awarded under technical co-opertion for the last five years, showing also how much they cost and where they were held.

Mr. Eggar: I regret that detailed information on individual scholarships is not readily available in the form requested by my hon. Friend and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. no scholarships are awarded to schoolchildren from overseas. Details of the numbers of awards made and overall expenditure by country are as follows:

Technical Co-operation and Training Programme (ODA)

Country	1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85		1985-86	
	Expenditure £	Awards	Expenditure £	Awards	Expenditure £	Awards	Expenditure £	Awards	Expenditure £	Awards
Central America										
Belize	102,300	34	93,100	30	77,597	18	93,500	19	131,800	18
Costa Rica	132,500	35	141,200	30	121,059	32	149,400	26	161,100	28
El Salvador	17,600	7	1,700	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Guatemala	4,600	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Honduras	18,600	6	25,600	6	56,458	10	31,600	8	65,800	14
Mexico	576,300	131	470,200	105	397,207	92	299,000	67	502,900	74
Nicaragua	—	—	18,300	3	17,416	3	20,200	3	—	—
Panama	60,300	14	48,800	11	38,399	10	51,200	9	62,700	14
Total Central America	912,200	229	798,900	186	708,136	165	644,900	132	924,300	148

Country	1981-82 Expenditure £	1981-82 Awards	1982-83 Expenditure £	1982-83 Awards	1983-84 Expenditure £	1983-84 Awards	1984-85 Expenditure £	1984-85 Awards	1985-86 Expenditure £	1985-86 Awards
Caribbean										
Anguilla	32,400	8	13,800	4	5,538	1	3,600	1	27,300	5
Antigua and Barbuda	31,900	9	25,900	10	31,153	6	35,500	7	26,400	4
Barbados	165,700	49	190,800	45	177,457	45	132,600	42	89,300	33
British Virgin Islands	22,400	9	25,600	12	28,566	11	31,900	8	40,900	9
Dominica	38,800	15	47,900	17	69,003	16	39,100	12	58,100	13
Dominican Republic	22,900	8	11,200	4	19,683	3	17,300	3	20,300	3
Grenada	11,900	4	11,900	4	26,459	7	91,100	20	116,800	23
Guyana	130,400	32	136,200	35	144,402	32	171,800	31	127,300	28
Jamaica	86,500	25	101,900	30	142,162	30	138,700	33	114,200	25
Montserrat	13,300	7	38,100	9	32,850	9	47,800	12	10,000	4
St. Kitts and Nevis	57,000	19	39,000	9	12,194	4	31,200	6	39,700	7
St. Lucia	56,200	16	61,000	18	22,341	11	72,200	14	39,300	12
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	41,000	13	41,100	13	49,541	10	61,300	16	48,200	11
Turks and Caicos	29,300	11	24,700	10	32,416	9	33,700	9	44,200	8
Total Caribbean	739,700	225	769,100	220	793,765	194	907,800	214	802,000	185

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Diplomatic Wing) Schemes
(did not exist prior to 1983-84)

Country	1981-82 Expenditure £	1981-82 Awards	1982-83 Expenditure £	1982-83 Awards	1983-84 Expenditure £	1983-84 Awards	1984-85 Expenditure £	1984-85 Awards	1985-86 Expenditure £	1985-86 Awards
Central America										
Costa Rica									20,124	6
Mexico					40,749	7	102,695	20	94,588	34
TOTAL CENTRAL AMERICA					40,749	7	102,695	20	114,712	40
Caribbean										
Bahamas					7,500	1	16,138	4	25,270	9
Barbados					30,000	5	32,052	4	56,775	17
Bermuda					43,370	35	30,326	21	35,425	20
Cayman Islands					7,678	7	5,224	5	3,345	4
Guyana							10,191	3	19,073	5
Jamaica					7,500	3	30,043	8	40,721	19
St. Lucia									3,465	1
Trinidad and Tobago								7	46,201	16
TOTAL CARIBBEAN					96,048	51	123,974	52	230,275	91

[1]*British Council Fellowships*

Country	1981-82 Expenditure £	1981-82 Awards	1982-83 Expenditure £	1982-83 Awards	1983-84 Expenditure £	1983-84 Awards	1984-85 Expenditure £	1984-85 Awards	1985-86 Expenditure £	1985-86 Awards
Central America										
Mexico	66,490	11	106,100	11	132,800	17	102,682	10	106,169	16
TOTAL CENTRAL AMERICA	66,490	11	106,400	11	132,800	17	102,682	10	106,169	16

[1] The figures for awards relate to new awards only.

Commonwealth Scholarships and fellowships plan (ODA)

Country	1981-82 Expenditure £	1981-82 Awards	1982-83 Expenditure £	1982-83 Awards	1983-84 Expenditure £	1983-84 Awards	1984-85 Expenditure £	1984-85 Awards	1985-86 Expenditure £	1985-86 Awards
Central America										
Belize					11,355	2	10,881	3	4,076	1
Total Central America					11,355	2	10,881	3	4,076	1
Caribbean										
Antigua and Barbuda	n.a.	1	5,250	1	2,471	1			6,170	1

Country	1981-82 Expenditure £	1981-82 Awards	1982-83 Expenditure £	1982-83 Awards	1983-84 Expenditure £	1983-84 Awards	1984-85 Expenditure £	1984-85 Awards	1985-86 Expenditure £	1985-86 Awards
Bahamas	n.a.	1	10,000	1	6,105	1	291	1		
Barbados	n.a.	5	47,420	8	60,917	7	35,922	8	50,105	6
Bermuda	n.a.	1					4,418	1	20,411	2
Dominica	n.a.	2	7,990	1	6,024	1	2,371	1	15,149	2
Grenada	n.a.	2	12,970	1	3,040	1	8,877	2	19,189	2
Guyana	n.a.	4	44,300	6	83,766	10	78,086	13	93,647	13
Jamaica	n.a.	8	83,110	12	71,906	10	82,669	16	111,985	15
Montserrat	n.a.	3	13,310	2	5,192	1	7,070	2	6,268	1
St. Kitts and Nevis	n.a.				8,161	1	9,231	2	10,320	1
St. Lucia	n.a.	2	4,300				7,782	1	21,029	2
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	n.a.	1	9,620	1	14,874	3	21,190	3	10,711	1
Trinidad and Tobago	n.a.	3	35,920	6	42,339	5	49,208	11	59,954	7
Turks and Caicos	n.a.	1	1,680	1			6,850	1	7,603	1
Total Caribbean	n.a.	34	275,870	40	304,795	41	313,965	62	432,541	54

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to her by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 24 March. Surveys of the ethnic origin of staff in post and new entrants to the diplomatic and development wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have been carried out on the basis of voluntary self-classification in accordance with the agreement reached between the Civil Service and the Council of Civil Service Unions. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office will consider any practical ways of improving the data base which are agreed between the Civil Service and the Council of Civil Service Unions. 49 per cent. of new entrants to the development wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office between 1 October 1985 and 28 February 1987 failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire. The corresponding figure for new entrants to the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office between 1 April 1986 and 28 February 1987 was 55 per cent.

The results of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office surveys will be included in the London and south-east and East Anglia staff-in-post surveys later this year.

Henry Gombya

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a British diplomat in Uganda drove to the airport a journalist, Henry Gombya, wanted in connection with a murder investigation; and what assessment he has made of the likely impact of the incident on British-Ugandan relations.

Mrs. Chalker: The deputy high commissioner in Kampala drove Mr. Gombya to the airport only after Mr. Gombya had obtained firm assurances from the Ugandan authorities that he was not wanted in connection with any murder investigation. Mr. Gombya left openly and unchallenged. I foresee no impact on our relations with Uganda.

British Presidency (Ministerial Speech)

Dame Judith Hart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to place in the Library a copy of his forthcoming speech to the London Chamber of Commerce on 3 April on the subject of the British Presidency.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes.

SCOTLAND

Venous Leg Ulcers

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of treating venous leg ulcers in Scotland in 1986.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not centrally available.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the pupil-teacher ratios for primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest date for which information is available is September 1985—when the ratios for primary and secondary were 20·4:1 and 13·5:1 respectively. That information is contained in Scottish Education Department "Statistical Bulletin No. 4/B1/1986", a copy of which is in the Library.

Weekly Incomes

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average weekly income of residents in the constituencies of Greenock and Port Glasgow and Perth and Kinross.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available.

Rivers and Estuaries (Survey)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the results of the 1985 survey of Scottish rivers and estuaries will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The report of the 1985 water quality survey of Scotland (Water Quality Survey of Scotland

1985, Scottish Development Department, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Price £7·00: ISBN 0 11 493382 0) which deals with the quality of the rivers, canals and estuaries in Scotland is being published today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The report demonstrates that the overall quality of Scottish waters continues to improve. More than 99 per cent. of the total length of Scottish rivers are now either unpolluted or of fairly good quality. While some local stretches of rivers show slight deterioration due to pollution from agricultural sources and from mining activity, overall 419 km are of higher quality than in 1980. Grossly polluted or poor quality rivers have reduced by 74 km.

Of the major estuaries, Montrose Basin and that of the River Garnock in Ayrshire showed marked improvement in water quality.

These improvements may be attributed in the main to investment by local authorities and industrialists in improved effluent treatment plant and to the efforts of the river purification boards, whose responsibilities include controlling and monitoring discharges. Overall, the progress is most encouraging.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Lloyd's (Police Inquiries)

3. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the police inquiries into the affair involving Ian Postgate, Lloyd's, and Alexander Howden to be completed; and when he expects to publish the report.

Mr. Channon: Police inquiries are well advanced. However, no date for completion can be given.

As I said on 26 January in a reply to a written question from the hon. Member, the interim report of the Inspectors appointed under Section 165(1) *(b)* of the Companies Act 1948 (Section 432(2) of the Companies Act 1985) to investigate and report on the affairs of Alexander Howden Group plc cannot be published while police inquiries continue.

Mergers

12. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will review the law regarding the control of merger situations affecting Wales.

Mr. Howard: The law on the control of mergers in the United Kingdom as a whole, which naturally includes mergers affecting Wales, is currently under review.

65. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether, in assessing mergers and takeovers by foreign companies, he takes reciprocity of rules into account.

Mr. Howard: In assessing mergers and merger proposals, my right hon. Friend takes into account all matters which may have a bearing on the public interest in that particular case.

CBI

16. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of the Confederation of British Industry; and what was discussed.

Mr. Channon: I last met representatives of the Confederation of British Industry at the National Economic Development Council on 4 February. Subjects discussed included skill shortages, management development and a report from the Specialised Organics Economic Development Committee.

Regional Development Grants

17. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been spent on regional development grants in England so far in 1986-87; what he expects to spend in 1987-88; and if he will provide figures for Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The provisional figures for payments of regional development grants in 1986-87 to end-February are £226·8 million in England, and £24·4 million in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. The 1987-88 provision for RDGs in England, as incorporated in the Supply Estimates, is £105 million. Future provision for expenditure on RDGs is not allocated at the regional level; the actual distribution will depend on the pattern of demand.

46. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been spent on regional development grants in England so far in 1986-87; what he expects to spend in 1987-88; and if he will provide figures for the north.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Provisional figures for payments of regional development grants (RDGs) in 1986-87 to end-February are £226·8 million in England, and £90·6 million in the northern region. The 1987-88 provision for RDGs for England, as incorporated in the Supply Estimates, is £105 million. Future provision for expenditure on RDGs is not allocated at the regional level: the actual distribution will depend on the pattern of demand.

Insider Dealing

18. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many investigations into insider dealing are currently being conducted by his Department.

33. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many investigations into insider dealing are currently being conducted by his Department.

45. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many investigations into insider dealing are currently being conducted by his Department.

Mr. Howard: Charges have been laid in two cases. Five cases are under investigation and in addition five cases are being considered for investigation.

Alnwick and Amble

19. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received regarding plans to assist in the promotion of industry in the Alnwick and Amble area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have received several representations about Alnwick and Amble relating mainly to assisted area status.

Manufactured Goods

20. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his current estimate of the deficit in trade in manufactured goods for 1987.

47. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his current estimate for the deficit in trade in manufactured goods for 1987.

54. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his current estimate of the deficit in trade in manufactured goods for 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his "Financial Statement and Budget Report" estimates that the deficit for 1987 in the balance of trade in manufactures will be £8 billion.

Invisible Trade

21. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's practice on publishing figures for invisible trade.

59. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's practice on publishing figures for invisible trade.

68. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's practice on publishing figures for invisible trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department publishes monthly estimates of invisible trade in the monthly press notice on trade statistics. The invisibles estimates are compiled and supplied by the Central Statistical Office. For the most recent periods, the statisticians publish a projection in round numbers until data become available to them. Monthly surveys of invisibles transactions are not conducted. Monthly figures are conventionally shown as one third of the corresponding quarter's figure.

British Design Talent

22. **Mr. Richard Page** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans for further policy initiatives to promote the use of British design talent by British companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department already runs an extensive programme to promote better use of good design by United Kingdom industry and commerce. We are considering further ideas for that programme which were suggested at a design seminar held by the Prime Minister in January, particularly measures to stimulate more and closer links between industry and higher education on design issues.

I am also developing new proposals to make expert design and related advice available direct to smaller firms on a regional basis. The aim will be to help such firms identify and pursue new, market led product opportunities and so improve their business prospects. Further details will be announced as soon as possible.

Manufacturing Industry

23. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the fall in the real value of manufacturing investment in the east midlands since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Manufacturing investment is one of many subjects on which I receive representations. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 February at column *281*.

26. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the fall in the real value of manufacturing investment in the west midlands since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Manufacturing investment is one of many subjects on which I receive representations. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 25 February at column *281*.

27. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the latest figures for investment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Pattie: Investment in manufacturing industry was nearly 20 per cent. higher in 1986 than in 1983; even though it was some 5 per cent. down on 1985. The underlying determinants of manufacturing investment—sustained growth in the ecomomy, improved profitability and a low rate of inflation—are very favourable and forecasters expect a significant increase in manufacturing investment in 1987.

35. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he next intends to meet the Trades Union Congresss to discuss investment in manufacturing industry.

Mr. Pattie: My right hon. Friend and I meet the TUC regularly at the National Economic Development Council, where matters relevant to improving industrial performance are discussed. I have no plans for a separate meeting on this subject.

Consumer Protection (Prohibition Orders)

24. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prohibition orders have been made under consumer protection legislation since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Seven prohibition orders have been made under the Consumer Safety Act 1978 since 1979. There were:

The Balloon-Making Compounds (Safety) Order 1979
The Tear Gas Capsules (Safety) Order 1979
The Children's Furniture (Safety) Order 1982
[1]The Toy Water Snakes (Safety) Order 1983
The Gas Catalytic Heaters (Safety) Order 1983
[1]The Expanding Novelties (Safety) Order 1983
The Scented Erasers (Safety) Order 1984

[1] Prohibition orders last for 12 months. The Toy Water Snakes (Safety) Order 1983 and the Expanding Novelties (Safety) Order 1983 have lapsed, the products having been removed from the market. The remainder were subsequently covered by regulations made under the Consumer Safety Act 1978.

Caterpillar Tractor Company

25. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further part he has played in the discussions concerning the proposed closure of the Caterpillar Tractor Company, Tammershields, Glasgow.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since my meeting with senior Caterpillar executives on 20 January my officials have kept in touch with the Scottish Office and with the company generally on matters relating to the closure decision. In addition, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry together with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, has met a delegation from the ASTMS parliamentary committee on this matter.

48. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what further meetings he has had with representatives of Caterpillar in 1987; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have had no meetings with the company since I last met senior Caterpillar executives on 20 January. My officials are, however, in touch with the company generally on matters relating to the closure decision.

Company Law

28. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals the European Commission is currently considering for the harmonisation of company law.

Mr. Howard: Details of proposals being discussed by the staff of the European Commission with member states or private interests and of directives being discussed by the Council of Ministers are contained in my Department's booklet "Harmonisation of Company and related law in the European Community", copies of which are in the Library.

30. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to seek to reform company law on nominee shareholdings.

Mr. Channon: The possibility of changing company law on nominee shareholdings and other matters is already under consideration as part of the review of the operations of the takeover panel which I announced in the House on 28 January. Both I and companies concerned have powers under the Companies Act 1985 to inquire into the ownership of shares. The Act also provides, in certain circumstances, for the restriction of rights attaching to shares in the event of inadequate responses to such inquiries.

New Technology

29. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's policy towards the promotion of new technology.

Mr. Pattie: The Government's policies are creating a business climate that encourages and rewards enterprise, thereby stimulating the development and application of new technologies.

In addition, many of the measures of assistance offered by my Department under the Science and Technology Act 1965 are concerned with the promotion and rapid adoption of new technologies.

Airbus

31. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement regarding Government funding for the Airbus A330 and A340 series.

Mr. Pattie: The Government's consideration of British Aerospace's application for launch aid for the A330-A340 is well advanced, and discussions are taking place with the company. A decision will be taken as soon as possible.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he now expects to announce his decision on Airbus A330-A340 launch aid.

Mr. Pattie: The Government aim to reach a decision on British Aerospace's application for launch aid for the A30-A340 as soon as possible. An announcement will be made thereafter.

36. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to announce a decision on Airbus A330-A340 launch aid.

Mr. Pattie: The Government are aiming to reach a decision as soon as possible. An announcement will be made thereafter.

Jaguar

32. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures for vehicle production and employment at Jaguar as compared with 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Jaguar production in 1986 was 41,437 units, 24 per cent. higher than the 1984 total of 33,437. Employment at the end of February this year was 11,731, some 2,500 higher than in August 1984 when the company was privatised.

Association of British Chambers of Commerce

34. **Mr. Conway** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met representatives of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met representatives of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce on 10 December 1986 when he discussed a wide range of industrial and commercial matters with the association's economic and industrial committee.

Bathroom Ceramics and Fittings

37. **Mr. Allan Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received concerning the effects of imports on the bathroom ceramics and fittings industry; and what response he has given.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department has received a number of representations from the bathroom ceramics and fittings industry about the effect of imports.

My officials have already held meetings to discuss the issues with representatives from the industry and are now consulting their colleagues in the Department of Environment about possible further action.

Westland plc

38. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to respond to the Trade and Industry Committee's report on Westland plc.

Mr. Channon: Yesterday I wrote to the Chairman of the Committee with the Government's response to this report.

National Space Plan

39. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the national space plan.

Mr. Pattie: The Government are considering the space plan and hope to come to a decision soon.

Power Station Equipment

40. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of power station equipment exported in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Power station equipment is not separately identified in the "Overseas Trade Statistics". The information is, therefore, not available.

Research and Development

41. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the current objectives of research and development funding from his Department.

Mr. Pattie: The objectives of my Department's research and development policy are to:

encourage industry to increase its own investment in research and development in line with other advanced industrial countries.

seek to secure more effective exploitation of national and international science and technology.

promote awareness and rapid adoption of key technologies.

help industry to achieve levels of quality and design matching the highest world standards.

encourage closer links between producers and customers for new products through, for example, public purchasing.

62. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the current and planned levels of public spending on research and development devoted to manufacturing industry.

Mr. Pattie: The information could only be provided at disproportionate cost since my Department does not record for all its schemes the amount of support going to different industrial sectors. However, it may be estimated that in 1986-87 my Department is likely to spend £280 million on research and development devoted to manufacturing industry and £310 million, £330 million, and £340 million in the three succeeding years.

Polarisation

42. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive a report from the Director General of Fair Trading on the principle of polarisation in connection with the sale of life assurance and similar investments.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. friend the Secretary of State received on 23 March the Director General's report on the effect on competition of the proposed rules, regulations, guidance and arrangements of the Securities and Investments Board, including the rules which provide for the polarisation of life insurance and unit trust intermediaries. A copy has been placed in the Library. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will consider the report in forming a judgment on whether SIB satisfies the criteria for the transfer of functions to it under the Financial Services Act, 1986.

Footwear (Chamberlain Phipps)

43. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment his Department has made of the effect upon the footwear industry of the proposed takeover of Chamberlain Phipps by Wardle Storeys.

69. **Mr. Fry** asked the Secretary of State of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received relating to the implications for the British footwear industry of the proposed takeover bid by Wardle Storey for Chamberlain Phipps.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has received no representations from the footwear industry on this subject. He makes his decision on whether a qualifying merger should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation in the light of advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. Both my right hon. Friend and the Director General take into account all relevant aspects of a proposal, including its potential effects on the markets concerned. My right hon. Friend this morning announced his decision not to refer this merger to the MMC. His decision was in accordance with the Director General's recommendation.

Consultants (Overseas Contracts)

44. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will review the scope and level of support given by his Department to United Kingdom consultants seeking contracts abroad; and what information he has as to how this compares with other Governments' assistance to their consultants.

Mr. Alan Clark: British consultants have benefited substantially from the Government's contribution to multilateral aid agencies, from our bilateral aid programme, and from the services available under the schemes of support administered by the British Overseas Trade Board. Direct comparisons are difficult, but the opportunities created compare favourably with those available to foreign competitors.

Regional Aid Maps

49. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to review the existing regional aid maps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have no plans to review assisted area coverage and would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 17 February at columns *526-27*.

Regional Aid (Wales)

50. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was his Department's total expenditure on regional aid to industry in Wales during the last year for which figures are available; and what was the corresponding figure for 1978-79.

Mr. Butcher: Expenditure by my Department on regional development grants and regional selective assistance in Wales was £98·3 million in 1978-79, and £1·6 million in 1985-86. Expenditure on regional aid to industry in Wales is now almost entirely undertaken by the Welsh Office. Responsibility for expenditure on regional development grants in Wales transferred from my Department to the Welsh Office in November 1984. Taking account of Welsh Office expenditure, the amount spent in Wales in 1985-86 under these headings represented some 22 per cent. of the total for Great Britain.

Export Aid

51. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much export aid has been provided to companies in the northern region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The full range of Government export support services is available to companies in all regions. However, the Department does not collate statistics which would show the full use made of these services by companies in individual regions. While figures are available which would show the number of firms which have, with the support of the British Overseas Trade Board, participated in overseas missions and exhibited at overseas fairs, these would not provide a complete picture of all the support made available. For example, figures are not available on a regional basis for expenditure under the export marketing research scheme and the overseas projects fund, two of the more significant sources of direct financial support to exporters.

Origin Marking

52. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to protect British industries, including textiles, made-up clothing and cutlery, in relation to origin marking.

Mr. Howard: The Government are currently considering, in the light of consultation with consumer and industry associations, the scope for introducing measures to replace the origin marking requirements of the Trade Descriptions Act 1972. Repeal of the 1972 Act is necessary for reasons of Community law and provision for this is made in the Consumer Protection Bill.

Manufacturing Investment

53. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the fall in the real value of manufacturing investment in the north since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Manufacturing investment is one of many subjects on which I receive representations. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) on 25 February at columns *203-204*.

60. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the fall in the real value of manufacturing investment in Yorkshire and Humberside since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Manufacturing investment is one of many subjects on which I receive representations. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 25 February at column *281*.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his latest estimate of the level of manufacturing investment in 1986.

Mr. Pattie: In 1986 manufacturing investment (including leased assets) is estimated to have been £6,620 million (in 1980 prices).

City Institutions (Self-regulation)

55. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce amending legislation in relation to arrangements for self-regulating organisations' monitoring of City institutions.

Mr. Howard: No.

Monopolies and Mergers

56. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he now expects to be in a position to bring forward new proposals in relation to Her Majesty's Government's policy on monopolies and mergers.

Mr. Howard: Work on the review of law and policy on mergers and restrictive trade practices is continuing. Meanwhile, if changes of policy within existing law are identified as desirable, the Government will not hesitate to implement them.

Medicines (Licence of Right)

57. **Dame Jill Knight** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce legislation to remove the licence of right provisions of the Patents Act 1977 as they apply to medicines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Government wish to remove medicines from the scope of the licence of right provisions in Schedule 1 to the Patents Act 1977 and therefore support Lord Northfield's Bill which has been introduced in another place for this purpose.

Japan

58. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action the Government intend to take over the next year to reduce the United Kingdom trade deficit with Japan; and what is his latest estimate of that deficit.

Mr. Alan Clark: We continue to press the Japanese Government to take all necessary steps to bring about a reduction in their trade surpluses. Such steps will need to

include further market opening, the implementation of structural reform and stimulation of domestic demand. From the provisional figures for the 12 months ended December 1986, United Kingdom trade with Japan showed a balance of trade deficit of £3·7 billion.

Textile Closures (European Regional Development Fund)

61. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the formula and methodology used to allocated European regional development fund non-quota section assistance to textile closure areas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The areas in the United Kingdom eligible for aid from the European regional development fund under the non-quota textile areas regulation (219-84) were Northern Ireland, Tayside, and three groups of travel-to-work areas in England (in West Yorkshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester). The allocation to eligible areas in the United Kingdom's programme of the aid available from the ERDF was based on statistics relating to Northern Ireland and to the individual eligible TTWAs in England and Scotland. Half of the total allocation was distributed according to each area's share of the total of job losses in the textile and clothing industries between 1976 and 1981 in all the areas. A further quarter of the allocation was made in proportion to the product of multiplying each area's annual average unemployment rate for 1983 by the number of jobs lost in the textile and clothing industries in the area between 1976 and 1981. The final quarter of the allocation was distributed according to the dependency of the areas on textile and clothing employment. Dependency was measured in two ways, equal weight being given to each criterion. The first was the number of jobs in the textile and clothing industries in each area in 1976. The second was the percentage of manufacturing jobs in the area in 1976 in the textile and clothing industry multiplied by the number of textile and clothing jobs in that area in that year.

The initial allocation was then modified by allocating a minimum of 1 million ecu to each individual area and adjusting the allocations to other areas downwards proportionately so as to arrive at the same total figure. Finally the allocations to Tayside and the three groups of TTWAs in England were aggregrated to form four block allocations.

National Quality Campaign

63. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many companies have been contacted by his Department in respect to the awareness campaign in quality assurance techniques.

Mr. Butcher: We estimate that over 50,000 companies have been contacted through the national quality campaign since its launch in 1983.

Cars (United Kingdom Content)

64. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures for the United Kingdom content of cars produced by the major United Kingdom-based manufacturers.

Mr. Butcher: According to the latest information available from each of the major United Kingdom-based vehicle manufacturers, the United Kingdom content of the cars which they produce here is as follows (the figures cover varying periods):

	Per cent.
Austin Rover	95
Ford	83
Jaguar	95
Lotus	89
Peugeot Talbot	60
Vauxall	50

Inward Investment

66. **Mr. Griffiths** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many jobs are estimated to have been created by inward investment since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: From information provided to the Invest in Britain Bureau by the companies themselves, it is estimated that nearly 148,000 new jobs will be created as a result of inward investment decisions taken within the years 1979 to 1986 inclusive. Many more jobs will have been safeguarded.

Marler Estates (Insider Dealing)

67. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will initiate an investigation into the possible contravention of the Company Securities (Insider Dealings) Act 1985 in transactions affecting the shares of Marler Estates.

Mr. Howard: When I am satisfied that there are grounds for doing so.

Regional Aid

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list in the *Official Report* the amounts and recipients of funds from the European regional development fund amongst companies in the Corby travel-to-work area since 1 May 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The current Corby TTWA is eligible for aid under the main quota section of the European regional development fund. Aid for industrial projects committed under the main ERDF regulation does not go to the company concerned but is retained by central government in accordance with the provisions of article 36 of that regulation, thus enabling the total amount of United Kingdom regional industrial assistance to be higher than would otherwise be the case. Details of successful applications under the United Kingdom's quota are published in "British Business".

In addition, small enterprises in the pre-1984 Corby travel-to-work-area are eligible for support under non quota measures in respect of certain steel closure areas. Under the first round of these measures, covering the period 1982-84, commitment to such enterprises from the ERDF totalled £0·255 million. In the second round measures, covering the period 1984-89, £2·03 million has been allocated to the Corby TTWA, for the business improvement service package of schemes. £1·8 million of this is being contributed by the ERDF, but not all of the allocation has yet been committed to applicants. Details of individual payments made under the first round

measures are not readily available. A list of individual payments made under the second round measures, as at end February 1987, is set out below.

Company	Total payments
Geoffrey Carter	1,107·00
McCahill Precision Eng. Ltd.	500·00
Wynn Electronics Ltd.	412·50
Universal Colours Ltd.	467·50
Concorde Printers Ltd.	165·00
Fentone Music Ltd.	1,402·00
Kandaprint	165·00
A. O. Donnell Construction Ltd.	264·00
The Dubois plc	566·50
Unity Print Ltd.	742·50
Barry Knott	462·00
Remchem Ltd.	1,155·00
M. C. Construction	715·00
Bianchi Peach Burgess Ltd.	500·00
Versicolour Ltd.	1,650·00
Transcolour (Corby) Ltd.	825·00
Vel-Va-Lube Company (Holdings) Ltd.	1,549·90
David Edward Beer	508·75
Dryflow Ltd.	963·00
Alberta Joinery	192·00
John Hill Printers	1,155·00
Customblend Ingredients Ltd.	495·00
Keenline Engineering Ltd.	1,650·00
Fromelord Ltd.	1,012·00
Milas Ltd.	1,045·00
Milas Ltd.	440·00
Phoenix Foods Manufacturers Ltd.	825·00
Northants Chamber of Commerce	6,270·00
Tadchurch Ltd.	1,500·00
Vitratech Products Ltd.	495·00
Ball and Young Adhesives Ltd.	1,276·00
J. and J. Bowman Ltd.	2,500·00
Tadchurch Ltd.	1,500·00
Stovart Enamellers	288·75
County Powder Coaters Ltd.	261·25
Trimcote Vacuum Coolers Ltd.	2,500·00
Cinlane Ltd.	249·88
Elpo Sales and Services Ltd.	1,500·00
Driverealm Ltd.	1,100·00
Arnos Manufacturing Co. Ltd.	500·00
R. I. Medcalf	396·00
Universal Colours Ltd.	302·50
Vitratech Products Ltd.	2,475·00
Control Components Ltd.	500·00
Corbie Building Supplies Ltd.	495·00
Bianchi Peach Burgess Ltd.	1,573·00
McCahill Precision Eng. Ltd.	2,500·00
Hydrodan (Corby) Ltd.	1,980·00
Lincolt Ltd.	2,090·00
Chester Packaging Ltd.	1,237·50
Images Graphic Design Studio L	1,237·50
Chester Printers Limited	1,787·50
Lincolt Ltd.	1,500·00
R. Mayhew and Nadin	2,500·00
Kandaprint	143·00
Vayland Ltd.	2,200·00
Stanley Precision Data Systems	1,100·00
Mr. D. J. Graham	550·00
Structural Glazing Ltd.	1,925·00
Ball & Young Adhesives Ltd.	825·00
Skarsten Manufacturing Co. Ltd.	2,101·00
Ball and Young Adhesives Ltd.	275·00
Magnum Racing Cars Ltd.	2,500·00
Premier Test Industries Ltd.	275·00
Laverplace Ltd.	1,201·45
Sherlock Brothers Joinery	178·75
The Sondes Arms	1,566·82
Trisons Marketing Ltd.	1,100·00
I. G. Nichol	495·00
Tadchurch Ltd.	1,500·00
John Hill Printers	687·50
Ramair Filter Systems Ltd.	1,375·00
Fenzi Design Ltd.	1,650·00
Astrocare Services Ltd.	2,500·00
Valient Trading and Holdings	2,475·00
Richard Norman Sanders	536·25
Mr. M. W. Peak	132·00
Astrocare Services Ltd.	1,500·00
Interwork	346·50
Executive Diaries Ltd.	1,485·00
Ramair Filter Systems Ltd.	1,498·75
Ball &Young Adhesives Ltd.	728·75
Meridian Metier	605·00
Executive Diaries Ltd.	137·50
Aquagraphics (UK) Ltd.	825·00
Cambridge Electronics Service Ltd.	990·00
Trainwell Ltd.	500·00
Tadchurch Ltd.	2,500·00
Northants C.C. Corby 86	2,406·25
Mr. & Mrs. J. Sudborough	2,500·00
Ball & Young Adhesives Ltd.	511·00
Good Food Pickles Ltd.	1,500·00
P. Haines & S. Cooper	632·50
EP Air Pollution Control Ltd.	660.00
Premier Test Industries Ltd.	1,375·00
Rhophase Microwave Ltd.	2,392·50
Bega Electronics Ltd.	495·00
Tadchurch Ltd.	1,500·00
BD Technical Polymer Ltd.	1,375·00
Unity Print Ltd.	1,111·00
Waverlink Electronics Ltd.	638·00
Ramair Filter Systems Ltd.	1,500·00
Quiverbrook Ltd.	1,100·00
Hydro-Tech (UK) plc	2,236·74
Hydro-Tech (UK) plc	1,500·00
Briggs Irrigation (UK) Ltd.	481·25
S. & H. Hardman T/A Division One	88·00
Mrs. Mary McFarlane	660·00
Ceramic Developments (Mid) Ltd.	990.00
Helmsley Meat Ltd.	500.00
Dryflow Ltd.	1,785·00
Drivewell Plastics Ltd.	4,375·00
Syntronics Ltd.	350·00
BD Technical Polymer Ltd.	420·87
Woodwell Timber	437·50
Milas Ltd.	2,100·00
IMA	3,500·00
Dryflow Ltd.	1,190·00
JDC Dental Laboratory	1,158·00
Columbia Plastics Ltd.	2,792·16
Columbia Plastics Ltd.	2,335·06
Bambo Ltd.	3,500·00
Ceramic Developments Ltd.	870·43
Hubbard & Sherwood	3,500·00
Laverplace Ltd.	3,500·00
Tadchurch Ltd.	3,500·00
The Pleated Curtain Co. Ltd.	2,450·00
Ramair Filter Systems Ltd.	3,482·00
Checkmate Business Machines Ltd.	2,275·00
Harold Mason	1,160·00
Gas (Printing) Ltd.	2,100·00
Quiverbrook Ltd.	3,061·10
Exporama Ltd.	835·00
The Haughton Moulding Co. Ltd.	6,405·00
KM Packaging Services Ltd.	1,305·91
Interroll Ltd.	7,000·00
Interroll Ltd.	2,540·97
Ramair Filter Systems Ltd.	5,943·00
Premier Test Industries Ltd.	3,500·00
Britannia Engravers Ltd.	4,515·00
Ramair Filter Systems Ltd.	7,000·00
Mrs. H. Cowan	2,286·90
Interroll Ltd.	3,264·10
Premier Test Industries Ltd.	3,500·00
Greenporch International Ltd.	3,509·52
Robin Tidd Management Ltd.	2,450·00
Premier Test Industries Ltd.	1,008·64
Ceramic Developments (Mid) Ltd.	3,500·00

Company	Total payments
Vayland Ltd.	10,290·00
Vitatech Products Ltd.	8,330·00
Quiverbrook Ltd.	4,057·20
Ceramic Developments Ltd.	28,000·00
Masyc Ltd.	35,000·00
Pyreco Ltd.	1,050·00
Rota-Burn Ltd.	35,000·00
Ceramic Developments Ltd.	7,330·72
Pyreco Ltd.	7,000·00
Remchem Ltd.	11,340·00
D & D Dispersions Ltd.	4,113·20
Magnum Race Cars Ltd.	35,000·00
Briggs Irrigation (UK) Ltd.	1,967·00
Structural Glazing Ltd.	35,000·00
Tadchurch Ltd.	35,000·00
Concorde Printers Ltd.	5,560·00
Fentone Music Ltd.	2,951·00
Kandaprint	559·00
R. G. & M. F. Sadler (Electrical)	11,000·00
Torello Formtools & Grinding	13,200·00
Woodwell Timber	17,100·00
Total	543,264·82

Note: These figures include both United Kingdom and ERDF elements.

Insider Trading

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his reply dated 19 February, *Official Report*, column *750*, concerning insider trading, he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each quarter since 1 January 1983 the number of cases referred to his Department and the number of these which are not at present subject to investigation; how many cases are now under investigation; how many arose out of investigations by the United States authorities; and when he expects more prosecutions to be brought.

Mr. Howard: The numbers are as follows. I am not able to provide information about confidential exchanges with the United States authorities, or to forecast when proceedings may be instituted.

Year and quarter	Total	Not under current investigation	Under current investigation
1983			
1	4	4	0
2	2	2	0
3	4	4	0
4	7	7	0
1984			
1	3	3	0
2	5	5	0
3	4	4	0
4	0	0	0
1985			
1	1	1	0
2	2	2	0
3	2	2	0
4	1	1	0
1986			
1	6	5	1
2	1	1	0
3	2	0	2
4	5	3	2
1987			
1	4	4	0

Note 1:
The category of cases "not under investigation" includes those cases where charges have been laid and those where investigation is being considered.
Note 2:
The current position is as follows:
Charges have been laid in two cases; five cases are under investigation; in addition, five cases are being considered for investigation.

Finished Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1957, 1967, 1973, 1979, 1985 and 1986 imports and exports of finished manufactures as a percentage of manufacturing output and of gross domestic product.

Mr. Alan Clark: Because trade in finished manufactures is not available on the same classification as output data, it is not possible to make a direct comparison; however, the following table should be of assistance:

	[1]Finished manufactures as percentage of total [2]manufactures		Trade as percentage of total sales of manufactured [3]products		Contribution of manufacturing industry[3] to GDP percentage
	Imports	Exports	Imports	Exports	
1957	28·9	54·9	..	..	..
1967	43·8	59·2	..	..	31·5
1973	53·8	59·3	21·8	19·6	30·5
1979	57·2	58·9	27·5	25·1	27·6
1985	63·6	62·2	36·3	30·1	23·8
1986	63·9	62·1	[4]35·5	[4]29·4	..

[1] Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), sections 7 and 8.
[2] SITC sections 5 to 8.
[3] Standard Industrial Classification, divisions 2 to 4; this includes output of food manufacturing industry, whereas food manufactures are not covered in SITC sections 5 to 8.
[4] 1986 January to year ending June 1986.
.. Not readily available.
Sources: Department of Trade and Industry; Central Statistical Office.

Joint Industrial Ventures (United Kingdom-USSR)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what review has been carried out by his Department of the rules and regulations for joint industrial ventures between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics promulgated by the Soviet Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department is constantly monitoring such information as it becomes available on Soviet joint venture legislation and providing advice to companies considering joint venture proposals. My Department was represented at the Anglo-Soviet economic conference organised by the CBI at the end of February at which Soviet experts and British companies

discussed the opportunities for joint ventures in the Soviet Union. However, it is for companies themselves to decide whether to enter into joint ventures and to negotiate acceptable terms with benefits for both partners.

Guinness plc

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has yet received his inspectors' report of their investigations into Guinness plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No, the inspectors have not submitted their report and I cannot give details of their investigation while it is in progress.

Midlands Area Coalfields

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he plans to give assisted area status to the midlands area coalfields; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have no plans to extend coverage of the assisted areas beyond those parts of the midlands area coalfields which are already designated. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 17 February at columns *526-27*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dairy farmers have sold their milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: The total number of quota transfers registered by the Milk Marketing Board in England and Wales since the milk quota system was established in 1984 is 5,618. It is not possible to say how many producers disposed of their entire quota in these transactions. Additionally, under the Milk Supplementary Levy (Outgoers) Scheme 1984 a total of 1,686 producers from England and Wales gave up their entire quota. Successful applicants under the Community outgoers scheme will not surrender their quota until 1 April 1987.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Jopling: On the policy issues, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 24 March. On response rates I regret that I cannot add to the information given to the hon. Member on 9 March at column *87*.

Farming Co-operatives

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many registered farming co-operatives there are in England and Wales; how many farms these include; and how many farming co-operatives there are in other Economic Community for farmers wishing to establish farming co-operatives.

Mr. Gummer: The Government do not collect statistics on farming co-operatives. However, the Plunkett foundation for co-operative studies at Oxford estimates that there are 540 agricultural and horticultural farming co-operatives in England and Wales involved in trading. In addition, there are machinery syndicates and co-operatives concerned with pest control and other activities. No figures are available on the number of farms involved in co-operation. Statistics on farming co-operatives in the EC countries are due to be published shortly and I will write to my hon. Friend when they are available.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what financial assistance is available from his Department or from the European Economic Community and farmers wishing to establish farming co-operatives.

Mr. Gummer: Under the agricultural and horticultural co-operation scheme 1985 non-capital grants of up to 75 per cent. are available towards the cost of setting up a co-operative association. The scheme also provides for grants of about one-third towards the marketing costs of newly established co-operatives in three of their first five years. Capital grants are also available at varying rates. Under EC Regulation 1035/72 launching aid can be aid for five years to formally recognised prolducer groups in the fruit and vegetables sector, based on a percentage of historic turnover and a percentage of administrative costs.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much financial assistance has been provided by his Department to farming co-operatives in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Gummer: Expenditure in the United Kingdom on grants to farming co-operatives has been as follows:

Financial years	*Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation Scheme (AHCS) (excluding forage groups)* £'000s	*EC Reg 1035/72 launching aid to producer organizations in fruit and vegetable sectors* £'000s	*AHCS grants to forage groups under EC regulation 797/85* £'000s	*Total* £'000s
1979-80	1,152	16	49	1,217
1980-81	1,431	19	49	1,499
1981-82	2,082	36	20	2,138
1982-83	2,357	198	24	2,579
1983-84	3,789	601	42	4,432
1984-85	4,526	884	39	5,449
1985-86	4,260	1,247	141	5,648
1986-87[1]	2,500	770	350	3,620

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his definition for the purposes of financial assistance from *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the European Economic Community, of a farming co-operative.

Mr. Gummer: The following may be eligible for grant:

(a) "A co-operative association" or "recognised group" defined in paragraph 2(1) of the Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation Scheme 1985. The second definition is for the purposes of grant to forage groups in the Less Favoured Areas under Article 17 of the EC Regulation 797/85. In both cases the applicant must be a registered society under Industrial and Provident Societies Acts or a body which Food From Britain are satisfied is in substance a co-operative association.

(b) A "Producers' organisation" in the fruit and vegetables sector defined in Article 13 of EC Regulation 1035/72. In essence it must aim to improve marketing by requiring members to sell all their produce through the organisation and apply production and marketing rules.

Factors in addition to these definitions are taken into account in deciding whether grant can be approved in any particular case.

Farm Animal Welfare Council

Mr. Corbett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date the Farm Animal Welfare Council regulations group was set up; on what date its phase one report was received by Ministers; and on what date he expects to receive its phase two report.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The council's regulations group held its first meeting on 11 November 1982 and presented its interim statement of proposed welfare regulations to Agriculture Ministers on 7 November 1986. The group is currently engaged on a study of pig production systems, the report of which I expect to receive around the end of this year.

Badgers

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take with regard to Professor Dunnet's recommendations on the future of the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have accepted Professor Dunnet's recommendation that the consultative panel should be kept in being. And, as further recommended, we have discussed with the panel's membership what changes could usefully be made in its composition and operation.

As a result of these discussions we have agreed that it would be desirable for the panel to have an independent chairman as is the case with the majority of similar Government advisory bodies. We are therefore appointing Mr. Mark Thomasin-Foster, an Essex farmer and National Vice-Chairman of the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group to this post. We believe Mr. Thomasin-Foster's background in both farming and conservation make him particularly well equipped for this role. Other appointments to the panel will be made shortly. In the light of Professor Dunnet's recommendations we have also amended the terms of reference of the panel, in particular to reflect more accurately the objective of our policy on badgers and bovine tuberculosis. The terms of reference are now:

(i) to keep under review the evidence relating to bovine tuberculosis in badgers, including its distribution, its prevalence and its relationship to bovine tuberculosis in cattle;

(ii) to advise on operations to be undertaken by the Ministry in order to limit the transmission of tuberculosis from badgers to cattle;

(iii) to recommend research appropriate to the problem of badgers and bovine tuberculosis.

Radioactivity

Mr. Baldry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions are at present imposed, or have recently been imposed, on the movement, sale and consumption of animal and vegetable products, live or dead, as a direct or indirect result of radioactive contamination anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1987]: In June and July 1986, restrictions were imposed on the movement and slaughter of sheep in parts of Cumbria, North Wales and Scotland. Today, less than 7 per cent. of the sheep originally subject to restriction remain under control. No restrictions have been imposed on other animals or foodstuffs since testing has shown radioactivity levels to be well below those at which precautionary action to protect public health would have been necessary.

Food Aid Scheme

Mrs. Shields asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of food available for distribution under the European Economic Community food aid scheme has now been delivered.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March 1987]: We have set no quantitative limits to the amounts of the foodstuffs concerned which may be distributed within these arrangements.

SOCIAL SERVICES

National Insurance

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will provide the fullest available information on the income levels of those paying class 4 national insurance contributions for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will provide the best available estimate of the numbers of individuals paying class 4 national insurance contributions for each year from 1957 to the latest available date.

Mr. Major: Class 4 contributions have been payable only since the 1975-76 tax year. Information on the actual number of class 4 contributors is not available but the estimates shown which have been derived from the Inland Revenue's income survey, give a good indication of the numbers involved. They will contain some over-statement —which is unlikely to be substantial—as they include those not liable to pay class 4 contributions because of being over retirement age or of being concurrently employed as employed earners and paying the maximum national insurance in class 1 and class 2 contributions.

People with income from self-employment greater than the lower profits limit for Class 4 National Insurance Contributions (Thousands) (United Kingdom)

	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Lower profits limit for class 4 contributions	£1,600	£1,600	£1,750	£2,000	£2,250	£2,650	£3,150	£3,450	£3,800	£3,950
Ranges of self-employment income										
Lower profits limit										
to £4,999	—	—	—	—	800	639	468	401	315	280
£5,000 to £9,999	—	—	—	—	351	429	491	593	684	788
£10,000 to £14,999	—	—	—	—	129	111	125	141	178	222
£15,000 to £19,999	—	—	—	—	—	44	59	67	74	98
£20,000 to £24,999	—	—	—	—	30	20	27	38	52	61
over £25,000	—	—	—	—	—	27	39	47	63	83
Total numbers with income above the lower profits limits	1,030	1,180	1,200	1,270	1,310	1,270	1,210	1,290	1,370	1,530

Notes:

(1) The Inland Revenue's income survey is a statistical sample survey of taxpayers' records. The components of each column in the above table may not equal its total because of rounding.

(2) Income is defined net of losses, stock relief and capital allowances.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will bring up to date for the year 1987-88 the information given in his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *204*, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby concerning the distribution of incomes and national insurance contributions, adding *(a)* the saving on the abolition of the reduced rate contribution and *(b)* the numbers contracted-in and contracted-out together with their contributions.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his forecast for 1987-88 of the number of class 2 and class 4 contributions for men and women together with the forecast revenue in each case.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

1987-88 Great Britain

	Class 2
Number of contributors (thousands)	
Men	1,900
Women	200
Contributions Payable (£ million)	
Men	360
Women	40

It is estimated that in 1987-88 there will be about 1½ million people liable to pay class 4 contributions amounting to £400 million in a full year, and that about 10 per cent. of these figures relate to self-employed women.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of females expected to qualify for the reduced rate of national insurance in the next financial year in return for reduced benefits, the amounts of revenue forgone as a result of this concession and the estimated cost if the recipients were able to claim full benefit.

Mr. Major: It is expected that during 1987-88 an average of 1·1 million females in Great Britain will be paying class 1 national insurance at the reduced rate for widows and married women. It is estimated that the full year cost of this concession (in 1987-88) in terms of lower contribution revenue will be £200 million. It is impossible to estimate reliably the additional benefit expenditure if those paying reduced rate contributions could claim full benefit.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving an estimated breakdown for 1987-88 of national insurance contributions on the same basis as in table 40.13 of "Social Security Statistics 1985", together with the appropriate contribution for employees and their employers, and his estimate of the revenue therefrom in each case.

Mr. Major: Information in the form requested is not available as the Government Actuary does not estimate the number of people paying national insurance contributions on the same basis as in table 40.13 published in "Social Security Statistics 1985". The following information is available:

Estimated Average Number of Contributors 1987-88 Great Britain

	(Thousands) Men	Women	Total
Class 1 Standard Rate			
Contracted out	6,300	2,800	9,100
Not Contracted out	5,100	3,900	9,000
Class 1 Reduced Rate	—	1,100	1,100
Class 2	1,900	200	2,100
Class 3	95	30	125

Estimated contributions payable in 1987-88 Great Britain

£ million

	Men		Women		Total		
	Primary	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Primary*	*Secondary*	*Total*
Class 1 Standard Rate							
Contracted Out	5,100	5,500	1,600	1,500	6,700	7,000	13,700
Not Contracted Out	4,100	5,100	1,500	1,600	5,600	6,700	12,300
Class 1 Reduced Rate	—	—	200	400	200	400	600
Class 2	360		40				400
Class 3	20		5				25

Notes:
(1) Estimated full year contributions yield payable in 1987-88.
(2) All estimates are based on the assumption used in the Report by Government Actuary on the drafts of the Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order 1986 and the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating (No. 2) Order 1986 (CM24).

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of a reduction of one percentage point in the employee's and the employer's national insurance contribution in 1987-88; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1957 the rate of contribution in each case as a percentage of average earnings, together with the standard rate of income tax on earned income.

Mr. Major: It is estimated that a reduction of one percentage point in the rates of national insurance contributions in 1987-88 will cost for the full year £1,590 million in respect of employees' contributions, and £1,770 million in respect of employers' contributions.

I shall answer the remainder of the hon. Member's question as soon as possible.

NHS (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Ames asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of annual savings which the National Health Service has achieved due to the competitive tendering of hospital cleaning, catering and laundry services.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) on 19 March at columns *613-24*.

Prescriptions

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the details of the different systems by which prescriptions are dispensed and charges collected through *(a)* doctors and *(b)* pharmacists; what is the estimated effect on revenue (i) in the United Kingdom and (ii) in Gwynedd of the present system; if he will introduce the same system for doctors as for pharmacists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Pharmacists dispense prescriptions on payment of the appropriate charge, unless a declaration that the patient is entitled to be exempted from paying the charge has been completed and signed. Pharmacists retain the charges collected and the sum involved is subsequently deducted from their remuneration.

Dispensing doctors dispense prescriptions on payment of the appropriate charge, unless the patient has declared that he or she is entitled to be exempted from paying the charge. It is for the doctor to decide whether an oral declaration will suffice. Dispensing doctors remit the charges they collect to family practitioner committees at monthly intervals.

We have no plans to change these arrangements.

The total prescription charge income for England in 1985-86 was £127·756 million which includes prescription charge income from dispensing doctors of £7·07 million. It is estimated that, in 1985-86, £5·8 million of income was not collected as a result of incorrect claims to exemption. It is not possible to break this figure down between pharmacists and dispensing doctors.

For Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the information sought is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Bisolvon

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, following the removal of Bisolvon from the selected list of National Health Service drugs scheme and the manufacturers' decision to discontinue this drug, what arrangements have been made for those patients who are dependent on Bisolvon and can find no alternative medication.

Mr. Newton: The product licences of right for Bisolvon were withdrawn at the request of the licence holder on 31 December 1986.

Section 9 of the Medicines Act 1968 provides exemption from the licensing requirements to enable a doctor to administer an unlicensed medicinal product to a particular patient of his. Information on the availability of this drug for such use would be a matter for the supplier.

An adequate range of alternative medicines remains available on the National Health Service.

Benefits (Claimants)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average amount received per household in supplementary benefit in the London borough of Southwark in January 1987 and the equivalent dates since 1979.

Mr. Lyell: No information is available about the average amount of supplementary benefit received per household in the London borough of Southwark. The following information relates to the average amount of supplementary benefit per claimant in the social security London south region. Some households contain more than one claimant.

Average weekly supplementary benefit

	£
February 1979	14·69
February 1980	16·49
February 1981	20·85
February 1982	27·40
February 1983	[1] 24·93
February 1984	[1,2] 23·51
February 1985	27·32
February 1986 [3]	29·71

[1] Reduction due to the introduction of housing benefit.
[2] Provisional figure.
[3] Latest date for which information is available.
Source: DHSS quarterly statistical enquiries.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all the persons originally appointed as chairs of family practitioner committees according to district health authority areas; the occupation they held at the time of appointment; which have been re-appointed and which not; of those not re-appointed, who replaced them; and in each case, what was their occupation.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is in the following table.

Family Practitioner Committees (90)	*Associated DHAs (191)*	*Chairman appointed 1 April 1985 unless otherwise indicated*	*Term of appointment*	*Occupation*	*New chairman from 1 April 1987 unless otherwise indicated*	*Occupation*
Avon	Bristol and Weston Frenchay Southmead	Mr. Phillip Price, MA	2 years	Solicitor	Mrs. Martha Perriam	Teacher
Barking and Havering	Barking, Havering and Brentwood	Mr. Michael Keegan, BSc, CEng	2 years	Retired	Miss Delva Patman, FRICS, ACIArb	Chartered Surveyor
Barnet	Barnet	Mr. James Lemkin, MA	2 years	Solicitor	Reappointed	
Barnsley	Barnsley	Cllr. John Driver	2 years	Retired	Reappointed	
Bedfordshire	North Bedfordshire South Bedfordshire	Mrs Winnie Brothwood, CBE, SRN, SCM, HV	4 years	Retired		
Berkshire	East Berkshire West Berkshire	Mr. Godrey Odds, ASVA	4 years	Chartered Valuer and Surveyor		
Birmingham	Central Birmingham East Birmingham North Birmingham South Birmingham West Birmingham	Dr. A. Llewellyn Lloyd, CStJ, JP, MB, ChB, MRSC, LRCP	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Bolton	Bolton	Mrs. Margaret Rothwell, FPS	4 years	Pharmacist		
Bradford	Bradford Airedale	Mr. James Ferguson, FCA, ATII	2 years	Chartered Accountant	Reappointed	
Brent and Harrow	Brent Harrow	Mrs. Renee Myers	4 years	Housewife Company Director		
Bromley	Bromley	Mr. Bryan Collins, FSCA, FRAES	4 years	Company Director		
Buckinghamshire	Aylesbury Vale Milton Keynes Wycombe	Mr. David Griffiths, LLB	2 years	Solicitor	Mrs. Susan Mourin, BDS, LDS, RCS	General Dental Practitioner
Bury	Bury	Dr. James Burt, MB, ChB,	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Calderdale	Calderdale	Mr. Alan Mackereth, FBCO, resignation effective 31 March 1987	4 years	Ophthalmic Optician		
Cambridgeshire	Cambridge Huntingdon Peterborough	Dr. Derek Cracknell, MBE, MB, BS	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Reappointed	
Camden and Islington	Hampstead Bloomsbury Islington	Dr. David Cohen, MA, MB, BS, LRCP, MRCS, FRCGP	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Mr. Ken Judge, MA	Director, Kings Fund Institute
Cheshire	Chester Crewe Halton Macclesfield Warrington	Mr. Simon Cussons, FCA	2 years	Chartered Accountant	Reappointed	
City and East London	City and Hackney Newham Tower Hamlets	Mr. James Keir, QC, MA	4 years	QC Retired		
Cleveland	Hartlepool North Tees South Tees	Dr. Hugh Donaldson, MB, ChB	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Mr. Cyril Hargreaves, MA	Retired
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	Mr. Myles Varcoe	4 years	Chartered Accountant		
Coventry	Coventry	The Lady Butterworth	4 years	District Organiser Citizens Advice Bureaux		
Croydon	Croydon	Mr. Michael Pringle	4 years	Solicitor		
Cumbria	East Cumbria South Cumbria West Cumbria	Mrs. Valerie Rickerby	4 years	Housewife, retired Journalist		

Family Practitioner Committees (90)	Associated DHAs (191)	Chairman appointed 1 April 1985 unless otherwise indicated	Term of appointment	Occupation	New chairman from 1 April 1987 unless otherwise indicated	Occupation
Derbyshire	North Derbyshire Southern Derbyshire	Dr. John Williams, MB, ChB, FRCGP, resigned 30 June 1986	4 years	General Medical Practitioner	Mr. Brian Ashby from 1 July 1986	Company Chairman
Devon	Exeter North Devon Plymouth Torbay	Mrs. Miriam Gent, BA	4 years	Housewife		
Doncaster	Doncaster	Mr. John Marshall, LLB	2 years	Solicitor	Dr. Robin Talbot, PhD	Lecturer
Dorset	West Dorset East Dorset	Mr. Basil Gillam	4 years	Solicitor		
Dudley	Dudley	Dr. Harry White, JP, MB, ChB, DObst, RCOG	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Mr. A. John Waldron	Solicitor
Durham	Darlington Durham North West Durham South West Durham	Mr. Roy Thomas	4 years	Retired		
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	Hounslow and Spelthorne Ealing Riverside	Mrs. Jillian Stern, BA	4 years	House of Commons Research Assistant		
East Sussex	Brighton Eastbourne Hastings	Dame Anne Springman, OBE, DBE	4 years	Housewife, Member of Economic and Social Research Council		
Enfield and Haringey	Enfield Haringey	Mr. Boris Whyorr, FBCO, FAAO, MRIPHH	2 years	Ophthalmic Optician	Reappointed	
Essex	Basildon and Thurrock Mid Essex North East Essex West Essex Southend	Major General Robert Wall, CB, FBIM, (RM retired)	4 years	Retired		
Gateshead	Gateshead	Dr. John Horler, TD, MB, BS	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Reappointed	
Gloucestershire	Cheltenham and District Gloucester	Mr. William Oakes, LDS, RCS(Eng)	2 years	Stud Farm Owner	Reappointed	
Greenwich and Bexley	Bexley Greenwich	Mr. John Stickland, MC	4 years	Business Consultant		
Hampshire	Basingstoke and North Hampshire Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Southampton and South West Hampshire Winchester	Mrs. June Ayling, LHA, BMS, MRSH	2 years	Lecturer and Broadcaster	Mr. David Paterson, BAR	Barrister
Hereford and Worcester	Bromsgrove and Redditch Hereford Kidderminster and District Worcester and District	Mrs. Ann Carter	2 years	Tourist Information Officer	Mrs. Elspeth Metcalfe, MA(Hons)	Housewife and Business Women
Hertfordshire	East Hertfordshire North Hertfordshire North West Hertfordshire South West Hertfordshire	Mr. Michael Johnson, BAR, resigned 26 September 1986	2 years	Barrister	Lady Joanna Staughton, JP	Housewife
Hillingdon	Hillingdon	Mr. Jeffrey Woolf, FCA	2 years	Chartered Accountant	Reappointed	
Humberside	East Yorkshire Hull Grimsby Scunthorpe	Mr. Brian Norden	4 years	Solicitor		
Isle of Wight	Isle of Wight	Dr. Graham Gent, MA, MB, BChir	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	Paddington and North Kensington Riverside	Mr. Robert Davies, BA	4 years	Director Community Development Organisation		
Kent	Canterbury and Thanet Dartford and Gravesham Maidstone Medway South East Kent Tunbridge Wells	Ms. Catherine de Smith, FRSS	2 years	Chairman and Managing Director	Reappointed	
Kingston and Richmond	Richmond, Twickenham, and Roehampton Kingston and Esher	Mr. Desmond Lewis, OBE, FPS, BAR	4 years	Secretary and Registrar, Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (now retired)		
Kirklees	Huddersfield Dewsbury	Mr. Sam Lyles CBE	2 years	Company Director	D. Mohammed Iqbal, PhD	Lecturer
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	Camberwell Lewisham and North Southwark West Lambeth	Mr. David Taylor BSc	4 years	Director of Economic Planning ABPI		

Family Practitioner Committees (90)	Associated DHAs (191)	Chairman appointed 1 April 1985 unless otherwise indicated	Term of appointment	Occupation	New chairman from 1 April 1987 unless otherwise indicated	Occupation
Lancashire	Preston Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale Lancaster West Lancashire Chorley and South Ribble	Mr. Frank Pethybridge, CBE, BA, FHA, FRSH	4 years	Retired		
Leeds	Leeds Eastern Leeds Western	Mr. Geoffrey Hickman, TD, MA	2 years	Retired	Mrs. Diana Scott, BSc (Hons)	Citizens Advice Bureau Organiser
Leicestershire	Leicestershire	Dr. Gwilym Edmondson-Jones MB, ChB, FRGP, DROG	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Lincolnshire	North Lincolnshire South Lincolnshire	Dr. Robert Aitkin, MB, ChB FRCGP	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Dr. Geoffrey Coady, PhD, FRSA	Local Government Officer
Liverpool	Liverpool	Mr. Robert Clark	4 years	Retired		
Manchester	Central Manchester North Manchester South Manchester	Dr. Alan McLean, MB, ChB	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	Mr. Arthur Wise, BDS	2 years	General Dental Practitioner	Dr. Lydia Smythe, MB, BS, MRCGP	General Medical Practitioner
Newcastle	Newcastle	Mr. William Forsyth BCom, AIB	2 years	Trade Association Secretary	Reappointed	
Norfolk	West Norfolk and Wisbech Norwich Great Yarmouth and Waveney	Professor Anthony Emerson, BA PhD	2 years	Professor of Sociology	Reappointed	
Northamptonshire	Kettering Northampton	Mr. Roy Sharp	2 years	Toolmaker	Reappointed	
North Tyneside	North Tyneside	Dr. Joseph Gordon, L(LM) RCP, L(LM) RSCI	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Northumberland	Northumberland	Dr. Christopher Robinson, BSc, PhD	4 years Senior Lecturer			
North Yorkshire	Northallerton York Scarborough Harrogate	Dr. Ian McLellan, TD, MB, ChB, MRCGP	2 years	General medical Practitioner	Mr. Frank Paterson	Retired
Nottinghamshire	Bassetlaw Central Nottinghamshire Nottingham	Dr. Atholl MacLaren, MB, ChB, FRCGP	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Oldham	Oldham	Dr. Edward Creswell, MB, ChB	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Mr. Geoffrey Hanson, BSc, MIPM, FIAE	Company Director
Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire	Lady Gilliam Williams	4 years	Housewife		
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	Redbridge Waltham Forest	Councillor, Leslie Bridgman, appointed 15 July 1985	4 years	Retired		
Rochdale	Rochdale	Mr. Lyndon Price, BSc, Dip Soc Sc	4 years	Retired		
Rotherham	Rotherham	Mr. James Coull, MBE, CEng, MIMechE, FBIM	4 years	Company Chairman		
St. Helens and Knowsley	St. Helens and Knowsley	Mr. John Dray	2 years	Head of Department College of Further Education	Reappointed	
Salford	Salford	Mr. Dennis Wallwork, FBOA, DOPTH	2 years	Ophthalmic Optician	Mr. Nigel Fowler, LLB	Company Director
Sandwell	Sandwell	Mr. Bertram Walters, MBE	2 years	Retired	Mr. Atherton Sealey, BA (Hons.), MSc	Director Community Project
Sefton	Southport and Formby South Sefton	Mr. Brian Worcester-Davis, JP	4 years	Government Servant		
Sheffield	Sheffield	Mr. William Blake	2 years	Solicitor	Prof. Neil Atherton	Professor of Chemistry
Shropshire	Shropshire	Dr. Duncan MacGregor MB, ChB D(O) RCOG	2 years	General Medical Practitioner	Reappointed	
Solihull	Solihull	Mr. David Gursham LDS	2 years	General Dental Practitioner	Mrs. Alys Woolley	Regional Director Midlands Invalid Children Association
Somerset	Somerset	Mrs. Eileen Woods, MBE	2 years	Housewife	Reappointed	
South Tyneside	South Tyneside	Mr. Anthony Brown	2 years	Solicitor	Reappointed	

Family Practitioner Committees (90)	Associated DHAs (191)	Chairman appointed 1 April 1985 unless otherwise indicated	Term of appointment	Occupation	New chairman from 1 April 1987 unless otherwise indicated	Occupation
Staffordshire	Mid Staffordshire North Staffordshire South East Staffordshire	Mr. Philip Jones	4 years	Company Director		
Stockport	Stockport	Mr. Ian Somerville, BSc, ARCS, FCA, FBIM, resigned 6 December 1985	4 years	Chartered Accountant	Mr. Samuel McGeorge, appointed from 31 January 1986	Retired
Suffolk	West Suffolk East Suffolk	Mr. Arthur Nicholls	2 years	Management Consultant	Dr. Anne Walton, PhD, FRSC, CChem	Writer and Lecturer
Sunderland	Sunderland	Mr. John Brown, LLB	2 years	Solicitor	Reappointed	
Surrey	North West Surrey Mid Surrey West Surrey and North East Hampshire South West Surrey East Surrey	Mrs. Margaret McNaughton	2 years	Housewife Company Director	Reappointed	
Tameside	Tameside and Glossop	Mr. Basil Sabine, OBE, MA, FTII	2 years	Tax Consultant Author	Mrs. Hilary Simon	Social Work Manager
Trafford	Trafford	Dr. Barry Tennant, MB, ChB, MRCGP	4 years	General Medical Practitioner		
Wakefield	Pontefract Wakefield	Mr. David Travis	4 years	Clerk National Coal Board		
Walsall	Walsall	Mr. Maurice Wolverson, FCA	4 years	Chartered Accountant		
Warwickshire	North Warwickshire Rugby South Warwickshire	Mrs. Margaret Blackhouse, SRN	4 years	Housewife		
West Sussex	Chichester Mid Downs Worthing	Mrs. Rosemary Cowley, CBE	2 years	Company Director	Reappointed	
Wigan	Wigan	Mrs. Catherine Caley, ALA	4 years	Chartered Librarian		
Wiltshire	Bath District Salisbury Swindon	Mr. Leslie Barker-Tufft, OBE, LDS	2 years	General Dental Practitioner	Mrs. Jeanne Perons	Solicitor
Wirral	Wirral	Mr. John Cooper, LDS, RCS (Eng)	2 years	General Dental Practitioner	Reappointed	
Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton	Mr. David Evans, BDS	4 years	General Dental Practitioner		

Pharmacists (Liability)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance is given to pharmacists and their employees as to the nature and the extent of their liability to the purchasing general public for any advice given in the course of dispensing medicines and drugs which are obtainable other than by prescription.

Mr. Newton: Pharmacists are subject to the same duty of care, responsibility and liability that any professional person accepts. The Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, the pharmacists' professional body, issues general guidance in the form of a code of ethics. It says for example that

"a pharmacist has a general responsibility to provide information and advice and he should take reasonable precautions to see that it is both accurate and appropriate".

East Hertfordshire DHA (Resources)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received relating to the level of resources being transferred from the North-West Thames regional health authority to the East Hertfordshire health authority consequent upon local hospital ward closures.

Mrs. Currie: We have received three representations about the level of resources transferred to East Hertfordshire health authority since 1 January 1987.

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current amount in the national insurance fund; and if any of the funds are re-invested.

Mr. Major: In the "Report by the Government Actuary on the drafts of the Social Security Benefits Uprating (No. 2) Order 1986 and the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) (No. 2) Order 1986" (Cm. 24) it is estimated that the total balance of the national insurance fund at the end of the 1986-87 financial year will be £5,617,000,000.

The securities held by the National Investment and Loans Office on behalf of the fund are listed in the NI fund annual account (HC 103 published December 1986) and are almost entirely British Government Securities and loans to local authorities.

Invalid Care Allowance

Sir Richard Body asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will give the reasons for the delay in payment of the invalid care allowance awarded from 9 September 1985 to Mrs. Carol Cubberley of Horncastle Road, Boston, reference number 021327.

Mr. Major: Mrs. Cubberley claimed invalid care allowance on 8 September 1986. Payment from that date was made on 17 November, but arrears from 22 December 1984 to 7 September 1986 were not paid until 20 March 1987. I regret the delay, which arose from a departmental error. Steps have been taken to minimise the risk of a similar mistake happening again.

Lung Cancer

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the regulations to introduce the prescribed disease disablement benefit scheme for those contracting lung cancer as a result of exposure to zinc chromate, calcium chromate, and strontium chromate dust will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) on 4 March, at column *628*.

Wistons Nursing Home, Brighton

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many visits were made by officials of his Department to Wistons nursing home, Dyke Road, Brighton in each of the years 1976 to 1986.

Mr. Newton: The number of visits made by departmental officials to the Wistons nursing home in connection with its approval under the Abortion Act 1967 for the years 1976 to 1986 is as follows:

	Number
1976	1
1977	1
1978	1
1979	1
1980	2
1981	3
1982	2
1983	2
1984	1
1985	2
1986	2

Venous Leg Ulcers

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of treating venous leg ulcers in 1986.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that it is not possible to estimate the total cost to the National Health Service of treating venous leg ulcers. These treatments are provided mainly by general practitioners and district nurses but data are not available on the proportion of their time spent on these problems nor are hospital costs identified for individual treatments.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each of the three categories of housing benefit in 1987-88 his estimates of the number of beneficiaries and the cost to the Exchequer together with a breakdown showing where possible for each category the number *(a)* receiving each type of benefit other than child benefit, *(b)* receiving only child benefit, *(c)* employed and receiving no other benefit and *(d)* unemployed and receiving no other benefit, together with the estimated cost of the housing benefit in each case.

Mr. Lyell: I shall let the hon. Member have the information that is available as soon as possible.

Abortion

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *504*, officials of his Department last visited the Leicester Nuffield clinic in order to monitor the implementation of the Abortion Act and the Infant Life (Preservation) Act.

Mr. Newton: The Leicester Nuffield clinic was last visited by departmental officials in connection with its approval under the Abortion Act 1967 on 12 November 1985.

Death and Maternity Grants

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many claims for *(a)* death grant and *(b)* maternity grant were made at the Greenock and Port Glasgow Department of Health and Social Security offices during 1986 at the last complete year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The information requested concerning claims at these two social security offices is as follows:

	Greenock	*Port Glasgow*
(a) Death Grant	1,462	367
(b) Maternity Grant	1,137	468

The maternity grant figures quoted are for the 1986 calendar year; the death grant figures are those for the period 18 December 1985 to 16 December 1986.

Calthorpe Nursing Home, Edgbaston

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action has been taken to monitor the implementation of the Infant Life (Preseveration) Act in relation to the Calthorpe nursing home in Edgbaston.

Mr. Newton: The operation of the Abortion Act, which which the Infant Life (Preservation) Act interacts, is monitored in the private sector, including the Calthorpe nursing home which is only approved to perform terminations up to 20 weeks' gestation, through a system of irregular, unannounced visits by the Department's medical, nursing and investigative officers, by scrutiny of the abortion notification forms which are required to be sent to the chief medical officer within seven days of an abortion being carried out, and by the investigation of specific complaints or allegations of abuse.

Public Health Laboratory Service (Merseyside)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money was allocated to the public health laboratory service on Merseyside during 1986-87; how much has been allocated for 1987-88; and if he will list the full range of its responsibilities.

Mr. Newton: Allocations for 1986-87 are £785,000 for the public health laboratory service Liverpool laboratory and £313,000 for the PHLS Chester laboratory. Firm decisions on 1987-88 allocations have yet to be taken.

The Liverpool laboratory provides:

i. the microbiology department for Fazakerly hospital;

ii. certain reference services for hospitals in all health districts on Merseyside;

iii. microbiology services for general practitioners in south Sefton, north Liverpool and parts of Knowsley;
iv. a service to all environmental health departments on Merseyside.

The Chester laboratory provides:

i. the microbiology department for the Countess of Chester hospital;
ii. microbiology services for hospitals in the Chester district, together with certain virology tests for Wirral, Halton, Wrexham and east Clywd;
iii. environmental microbiology services for Chester, Halton, Ellesmere Port, Neston, Warrington, Vale Royal, Crewe and east Clywd;
iv. microbiology services for general practitioners in Wirral, west and north Cheshire and parts of east Clywd.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many personnel are currently employed in the public health laboratory service on Merseyside; and what were the levels of establishment over the past five years.

Mr. Newton: The public health laboratory service Liverpool laboratory has 58 staff; its establishment has increased by one over the past five years. The PHLS laboratory at Chester, which provides some services to parts of Merseyside, has 26 PHLS staff together with six National Health Service staff; the size of its establishment has remained unchanged in the past five years.

AIDS

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many blood tests for AIDS have been undertaken in the last three months by the public health laboratory service on Merseyside; and how many were taken in the same period last year.

Mr. Newton: The public health laboratory service Liverpool laboratory undertook 1,735 HIV tests during the period 1 January 1987 to 20 March 1987. The comparable figure for the first three months of 1986 was 249.

Kidney Dialysis (Merseyside)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients are currently undergoing kidney dialysis treatment on Merseyside; how many patients are on the waiting list; and what is the longest period of time which has elapsed since any of the outstanding cases were referred for dialysis treatment.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Putney received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, 835 claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's office in Wandsworth which covers the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Welwyn and Hatfield received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

	Number
Hatfield	681
Hertford	1,067
St. Albans	1,056

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Battersea received maternity allowance in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending April 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the following numbers of claims to maternity allowance were made at the Department's offices which cover the constituency although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Battersea[1]	—
Balham[1]	—
Wandsworth	835

[1] Claims for these offices are dealt with at Broadstairs outstation. A total of 3,703 claims were dealt with at that office but this total includes claims proper to other offices.

Social Fund

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will issue the consultation document on the social fund.

Mr. Major: I have today sent to the local authority associations and to members of the SSAC for comment a draft of the proposed directions and guidance for social fund officers on the operation of the social fund from April 1988, and to national voluntary organisations and to professional bodies for information. I have placed a copy in the Library.

Nursing Staff

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each district health authority in England and for each year since 1982 the total number of nursing staff employed in private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics giving the numbers of *(a)* full-time employees, *(b)* part-time employees, *(c)* total number of employees and *(d)* whole-time equivalents.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 13 March 1987, c. *331*]: For the latest available district health authority information, I refer the hon. Member to the summary booklet of private hospitals statistics 1985, a copy of which is in the Library. Matching information for the earlier years is contained in tables which I have arranged to be placed in the Library today.

Medical Staff

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of consultant medical staff per unit in each regional health authority in England and Wales at the latest available date.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. 77]: Information on the number of consultant medical staff in each region in England, and on the number of units of management, is given in the table. However the definition of a unit of management varies from district to district and the figures for different regions are therefore not directly comparable.

Number of consultant medical staff and of units of management by region

Region	Number of consultants[1]	Number of units of management
Northern	937	48
Yorkshire	938	44
Trent	1,171	58
East Anglian	552	23
North-West Thames	1,122	43
North-East Thames	1,487	50
South-East Thames	1,181	47
South-West Thames	907	39
Wessex	747	33
Oxford	689	32
South Western	837	28
West Midlands	1,368	78
Mersey	689	31
North-Western	1,240	58

[1] As at 30 September 1986. Figures given are for the number of consultants who held a contract with one or more employing authorities in the region at that date. Some consultants hold contracts in more than one region.

Benefit Claims

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the backlog of claims at the Apollo house office of his Department in Coventry in January 1986, July 1986 and January 1987.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987]: The table sets out the information requested about outstanding claims to social security benefits.

Benefit	14 January 1986	27 July 1986	13 January 1987
Coventry West Local Office			
Sickness/Invalidity	262	113	86
Maternity allowance	116	86	60
Retirement pension	274	250	245
Severe disablement allowance	n.k.	12	42
Supplementary benefit	417	742	321

n.k. = Not known.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Entertainers and Sportsmen (Taxation)

Mr. Squire asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to which other countries normally levy a withholding tax on visiting entertainers and sportsmen; and at what level of payment the taxation commences.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Countries which have withholding arrangements include the USA, Canada, France, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

Generally, tax is withheld on all payments subject to the effect of the relevant double taxation agreement. For example, the United Kingdom-United States of America convention exempts the visiting entertainer or sportsman from liability where the gross receipts do not exceed $15,000 (or their sterling equivalent) in the tax year concerned.

Oil and Gas Revenue

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of revenue collected each year from 1979, inclusive from the production of North sea oil and gas as *(a)* royalties, *(b)* petroleum revenue tax, *(c)* corporation tax and *(d)* other taxes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest figures for Government revenues from United Kingdom oil and gas production in each year from 1979-80 are as follows:

£ million

	Royalty	Petroleum Revenue Tax[1]	Corporation Tax before ACT set-off	Supplementary Petroleum Duty
1979-80	628	1,435	250	—
1980-81	992	2,410	341	—
1981-82	1,396	2,390	681	2,025
1982-83	1,632	3,274	521	2,395
1983-84	1,904	6,017	877	—
1984-85	2,426	7,177	2,427	—
1985-86	2,057	6,375	2,923	—
1986-87	900	1,260	2,700	—

[1] Including advance payments.
[2] (1987-88 FSBR estimate).

Tax Exemption

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the saving to the Exchequer in 1987-88 of ending the exemption for life assurance, pension and other funds of *(a)* income tax and *(b)* capital gains tax;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the saving to the Exchequer in 1987-88 of ending the tax exemption on the interest paid on guilt-edged securities to overseas residents.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for *(a)* two-earner families with a wife's earnings election and *(b)* other higher-rate taxpayers by tax category, his estimate of the number and distribution of incomes, together with the average unearned income and average amount of mortgage interest relief in each income band in each category in the next financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Fringe Benefits (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate for 1986-87 and his forecast for 1987-88 of taxable fringe benefits on the same basis as that shown in table 5.5 of the latest issue of "Social Trends";

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate for 1987-88 of the number of recipients and the scale charge for taxable fringe benefits for directors and higher paid employees in the case of cars, free fuel and private medical insurance.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Unearned Income

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for those of working age the income distribution by tax category of those with an unearned income of more than £200 and £500 a year, respectively;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the distribution of gross unearned incomes, including tax credits, in the coming financial year by range of income in steps of £1,000 to £20,000 divided between elderly and other taxpayers and between single persons and one-earner and two-earner households.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date for 1987-88 the information in the reply dated 25 July 1986, *Official Report*, column *698*, concerning reduced rate contributions together with the estimated cost to the Exchequer; and if he will publish his subsequent letter in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on income tax reductions provided in his reply of 14 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, columns *314-5*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxable Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for 1987-88 of the taxable value of benefits subject to (i) special and (ii) general rules, together with the estimated revenue therefrom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Self-employed Persons (Taxation)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of tax units where the main source of income is self-employment income in each year since 1983-84.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Blind Persons

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost in Wales for 1987-88 of the increased relief for blind persons.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Earnings

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will update to April 1987 the information on net earnings provided in his reply of 10 February to the hon. Member for Fulham, (Mr. Raynsford), *Official Report*, columns *177-78*;

(2) if he will update to 1987-88 the information on real net earnings provided in his reply of 10 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, columns *193-94*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible

Married Man's Allowance

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, in the light of the 1987 Budget, the information on the married man's allowance provided in his reply of 14 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, column *315*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 28 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *326-28;*

(2) if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 21 October 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *807-8*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Incomes (Budget Effects)

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide for 1987 the same information provided in his reply of 27 October 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *53-56*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Tax and National Insurance

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will update to 1987-88 the information on tax and national insurance contributions provided in his reply of 30 January to the hon. Member for Thurrock, *Official Report*, columns *413-16*;

(2) if he will update to 1987-88 the information on tax and national insurance contributions as a proportion of gross earnings provided in his reply of 19 February to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, column *829*; and if he will provide the same information for a married man with an earning wife;

(3) if he will update, to take account of the 1987 Budget, the information on tax and national insurance provided in his reply of 9 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Thurrock, columns *124-25*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Budget Statement

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of printing and distributing the Budget statement at railway stations on 17 March; and what was the income from the sale of these pamphlets.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Gross Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the distribution of gross incomes in the coming financial year by range of income in steps of £1,000 to £20,000 and £5,000 to £50,000 divided between elderly and other taxpayers and between single persons and one-earner and two-earner households.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Unitary Tax

Mr. Harris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on unitary tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government announced on 18 December 1986 that, while they do not intend to recommend the repeal of section 54 of the Finance Act 1985, they are prepared to defer initiating action under section 54 for the present in recognition of the progress that has been made towards resolving the unitary tax issue. In the meantime, progress towards a final resolution of the unitary tax issue will be kept under careful review. Should it be necessary to take action under section 54 before 31 December 1988 it will not apply to dividends paid before the date of the announcement of such action. If it is necessary to take action thereafter, it will not apply to dividends paid on or before 31 December 1988.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 26 March 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Alexander asked the Attorney-General when the Government propose to respond to the recommendations contained in the legal aid scrutiny.

The Attorney-General: The Government have today published a White Paper (Cm.118) which sets out their proposals for the future of the legal aid schemes in England and Wales.

ENVIRONMENT

Pugneys Pleasure Area, Wakefield

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the date and venue for the public inquiry into the Pugneys Wakefield, pleasure area proposals had been specifically identified; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The inquiry is to take place in the council chamber in Wakefield town hall on Tuesday 12 May 1987. My right hon. Friend will announce his decision as soon as possible following receipt of the inspector's report.

Swans

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of swans that have died as a result of lead shot poisoning in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is estimated that 3,000-3,500 mute swans died each year from this cause in the period 1980-85. The estimate is derived by relating details of post-mortem examinations carried out at a number of centres to the known annual mortality rate of the population as a whole. It is too soon to assess the effects of the recent statutory ban on the sale of certain lead angling weights, but the Nature Conservancy Council will monitor the position.

Wellingborough Borough Council

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department will inform Wellingborough borough council of the result of its application of 9 December 1986 for an additional allocation to the home insulation scheme for the 1986-87 financial year.

Mr. Tracey: The Department has informed the council that its application for additional resources under the homes inslation scheme has been successful.

Rating Authorities (Precepts)

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the precepts levied on the rating authorities by the shire counties in England, as notified to his Department, in terms of amounts in the pound for domestic ratepayers and for commercial ratepayers for 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: Following is the available information:

Shire County Precepts in England 1987-88

	pence
Avon	228·50
Bedfordshire	232·20
Berkshire	178·50
Buckinghamshire	208·50
Cambridgeshire	206·00
Cheshire	211·00
Cleveland	252·00
Cornwall	184·00
Cumbria	246·50
Derbyshire	262·00
Devon	188·50
Dorset	189·00
Durham	214·00
East Sussex	190·30
Essex	199·50
Gloucestershire	194·26
Hampshire	184·10
Hereford & Worcester	168·50
Hertfordshire	205·60
Humberside	217·00
Isle of Wight	207·14
Kent	170·60
Lancashire	197·50
Leicestershire	199·30
Lincolnshire	179·00
Norfolk	173·60
Northamptonshire	199·00
Northumberland	(see note 2) 200·70
North Yorkshire	194·00
Nottinghamshire	236·00
Oxfordshire	218·30
Shropshire	184·00
Somerset	200·50
Staffordshire	198·50
Suffolk	189·00
Surrey	183·50
Warwickshire	196·00
West Sussex	176·00
Wiltshire	203·40

Notes:

1. In addition to the county precept, ratepayers in the shires will pay a district rate and possibly a parish rate. These together comprise the general or commercial rate. The domestic rate is calculated by subtracting 18·5p from the general rate, not specifically from the county precept.
2. The Northumberland precept excludes the Northumbria Police Authority precept of 14·20p, as this is a joint metropolitan police authority shared with Tyne and Wear districts.

Rate Reform

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of all the notes on the impact of the Government's rate reform proposals provided to representatives of the provincial press on 23 March; and if he will list the representatives of the press who received them and the areas of England to which they relate.

Mr. Chope: On 23 March my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and I met representatives of the

regional press, at their request, to discuss the Government's proposals for the reform of the rating system. Those concerned were given notes summarising the likely effect of the new system on the areas of interest to them. The journalists concerned, and the areas they cover, were as follows:

Gordon Jackson (Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Reading, north-east Lancashire);
Maurice Toseland (Wolverhampton);
Stan Sparks (Birmingham);
Ian Craig (Manchester);
Alan Goddard (Hull, Grimsby);
Jack Foster (Bradford, York, Brighton).
Chris Walker (Liverpool) was invited but was unable to do so.

On the same day copies of the relevant notes were sent to the hon. Members most concerned. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has conducted to assess the differing environmental implications of internationally agreed policies to *(a)* freeze production of chlorofluorocarbons production by 25 per cent.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department is an active participant in the work of the co-ordinating committee for the ozone layer which is run by the United Nations environment programme. CCOL has been assessing various scenarious for potential ozone depletion by CFCs and other trace gases, and these are also under consideration by the Government's stratospheric ozone research group. A two-dimensional model for testing scenarios, which is being developed in Cambridge, will enable my Department to conduct its own independent assessments.

Ozone

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain what effect ozone found at low level as a photochemical pollutant is having on the ozone layer.

Mr. Waldegrave: Ozone generated near the ground (largely due to hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen) is not transported into the upper atmosphere, and has no effect on the ozone layer. Ozone is sometimes transferred to ground level from the stratosphere, however. A detailed discussion can be found in the recent report from the DOE photochemical oxidant review group, a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Helicopter Accidents

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many helicopter accidents have occurred onshore and offshore in each of the last 10 years; and if he will show in tabular form the date and place of each incident, the make of the helicopter concerned, the cause of the accident, and the numbers killed or injured respectively.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority, which is statutorily responsible for aviation safety, has told me that since January 1976 there have been 259 accidents to United Kingdom registered helicopters reported to it. The precise information requested by the hon. Member could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

A1 (Brampton-Stamford)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* accidents and *(b)* fatalities there have been on the A1 between Brampton and Stamford for each of the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The record of accidents is as follows:

	Injury Accidents	*Number of accidents involving fatality*
1982	112	6
1983	92	8
1984	117	8
1985	114	3
1986	142	9

During this period, traffic on the road has increased by up to 39 per cent.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the extent and time scale of his proposals for *(a)* building flyovers and *(b)* upgrading the A1 to motorway standard between Brampton and Stamford;

(2) whether he has any proposals to reduce the number of *(a)* intersections or *(b)* crossover points on the A1 between Brampton and Stamford.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following a study completed in 1986, we have been considering the justification for flyovers and other improvements on A1 in Cambridgeshire. The results will be announced shortly when the current road programme review is complete. A flyover at the Brampton A604 junction is already included in the proposals for the M1-A1 link.

We are also examining small-scale proposals for reducing traffic movements across A1. These do not include complete closure of any side road junctions. There are no proposals for upgrading this section of A1 to motorway standard.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to install crash barriers on the A1 between Brampton and Stamford.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A1 is being reviewed following the initiative announced in December for providing central safety fencing on the majority of dual carriageway trunk roads. As a first step, fences have been added to a contract for structural maintenance north of Carpenters lodge, near Stamford which started recently.

A programme will be drawn up for additional fencing where justified, and as resources allow. The work will need to be spread over a period of years.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many intersections on the A1 between Brampton and Stamford have no roundabout or lights.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are eight with grade separation and three at-grade roundabouts. The remainder comprise 31 simple at-grade junctions. Five out of the 42 have lighting. There are no traffic lights.

Channel Tunnel Bill

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Glasgow district council requesting amendments to the Channel Tunnel Bill to ensure that through train services across and around London provide links between the tunnel and Glasgow.

Mr. Moore: None. I understand however that the district council has subemitted to the Select Committee of another place, which is at present considering the Channel Tunnel Bill, a petition which covers this point. The Government have already accepted at Report stage in this House the principle of an amendment to the Bill which would require British Rail to draw up plans for the dispersal of Channel tunnel rail services to destinations beyond London.

Learner Drivers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 23 March on accidents involving learner drivers, he will ensure that details of a driver's length of experience are recorded on the accident report form.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Obtaining this information would require examining driving licences for over 400,000 vehicles each year and place an unacceptable burden on the police.

Driving Tests

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East on 23 March on driving tests, he will make it his policy to procure information on the number of tests which those taking driving tests have previously failed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans at present to collect this information.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most serious accident recorded during a driving test in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The records of accidents on tests cannot be interpreted in this way. They provide only brief details of the type of accident and whether the examiner was injured.

Pursuant to my reply, of 23 March, I apologise for an error in the figure I gave for the number of accidents on test in the year October 1983-September 1984. The figure ought to have been 973. That is 0·05 per cent., or about 1 in 1,850 tests conducted. My mistake was in using the Metropolitan traffic area figure.

Trading Standards Officers

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration is being given to increasing inspection powers of trading standards officers; whether this includes consideration of making spot checks on second-hand car dealers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's vehicle examiners have the necessary qualifications and powers to inspect second-hand cars. We will shortly be running four pilot projects involving spot checks on second-hand car dealers undertaken jointly by vehicle examiners and trading standards officers.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Video Recordings Act 1984

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under the Video Recordings Act 1984; and with what results.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me, which may be incomplete, indicates that there were no prosecutions under the Act in 1985. No figures of prosecutions are yet available for 1986.

TA Centre, Leyton

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the reasons for the presence of a large number of police vehicles and police officers in the vicinity of the Territorial Army centre, Lea Bridge Road, Leyton, in the evening of 21 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that as part of his contingency plans officers were held in reserve at this place on 21 March for use if there had been an outbreak of public disorder.

Homicide

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons previously convicted for homicide were convicted for a second homicide offence in the period from 1965 to 1986; and what were the figures within that total for each five-year period.

Mr. Mellor: Information is published in table 4.9 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1985" (Cm. 10), and the corresponding tables in the volumes for earlier years, and is summarised in the following table.

Suspects convicted of homicide by previous homicide convictions
England and Wales *Number of persons*

Year initially recorded as homicide	*Number previously convicted of homicide*
1965	—
1966	1
1967	2
1968	—
1969	1
1970	2
1971	1
1972	—
1973	2
1974	3
1975	2
1976	3
1977	5
1978	4
1979	5
1980	1

Year initially recorded as homicide	Number previously convicted of homicide
1981	4
1982	2
1983	3
1984	3
1985 (revised)[1]	2
1986 (provisional)[1]	1
1965-69	4
1970-74	8
1975-79	19
1980-84	13

[1] As at 24 March 1987

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if figures for the percentage increase in murders made known to the police *(a)* between 1945 and 1965 and *(b)* between 1965 and the most recent year are available separately from those listed under the heading "Offences initially recorded as homicide" in table 4.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1985."

Mr. Mellor: In the absence of a court decision it is not possible to distinguish between offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide — they are known collectively as homicide. Since 1967, the numbers of homicides decided to be murder are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", in table 4.2 of the volume for 1985 (Cm. 10) and in the corresponding table in the volumes for earlier years. For persons convicted of murder, an indication of the changes in the numbers since 1945 may be obtained from the results of court proceedings which are published in table S2.1*(a)* of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, 1985" and in the corresponding tables for earlier years.

Post-school Educational Institutions

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column 559, how much money has been allocated under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 since January 1976 in each local authority to post-school educational institutions; and if he will give a breakdown as to the various purposes to which these funds have been allocated.

Mr. Waddington: Grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 is paid to local authorities on the cost of employment of staff to help meet the special needs of people of Commonwealth origin. Information about the cost of posts in post-school educational institutions for the years requested cannot be readily obtained from our records. The following table gives available information about such posts from the annual claim submitted by local authorities for the year 1986-87. The list does not include any posts which may have been approved subsequently or posts which have been approved but which the local authority has not yet filled.

	£
Avon	
1 Co-ordinator	14,219
1 CA	5,896
4.4 Tutors	17,941
0.3 Technicians	2,040
4 Tutor/Organisers	40,745
Barking	
5 p/t adult education tutors—Barking College of A.E.	198,546
Barnet	
2 × 50 per cent. Lecturer/Liaison Officers	16,100
5.2 p/t Lecturers—E.S.L.	52,000
Bedfordshire	
4 Lecturers—Bedford College	68,448
4.5 posts—Adult Education	32,266
Birmingham	
38 Lecturers in colleges of further education	402,150
4.33 F.T.E. C.As in colleges of further education	18,000
14.00 F.T.E. Lecturers in community education	205,130
Bradford	
28.12 F.T.E. Lecturers	565,500
Brent	
14 Further Education Lecturers	235,900
33,000 hours per year—Evening Institute Lecturers	198,100
Buckinghamshire	
1 Adult Basic Education Teacher—Aylesbury Vale	8,145
1 F/T Adult Basic Education Teacher—Milton Keynes 7 P/T Adult Basic Education Teacher—Milton Keynes	18,778
1 F/T Adult Basic Education Teacher—Wycombe 9 P/T Adult Basic Education Teacher/Wycombe	23,499
5 Adult Basic Education ancillaries—Milton Keynes	1,352
1 Adult Basic Education ancillary—Wycombe	3,572
Cambridgeshire	
864 hours ESL—Peterborough Tech. College	7,263
370 hours community education—Peterborough AE College	3,125
1 Lecturer—Peterborough Adult Education College	13,148
600 hours—community education—Cambridge	5,044
Calderdale	
2 ESL Lecturers	25,090
40 p/t lecturing hours—ESL	26,210
Coventry	
1 Adult Education Organiser at Broad Heath	14,729
1·7 FTE ESL Lecturers—Sidney Stringer College	21,786
1 Home Tutor Organiser—Community Education Project	17,882
0·5 Tutor for unemployed—Industry Language Unit	6,254
6,630 p/t Sessional lecturing hours—Sidney Stringer College	5,524
Derbyshire	
5 Further Education Teachers	36,100
Dudley	
5·5 Community ESL Tutors	22,676
Ealing	
14 Further Education Lecturers	186,508
1 Adult Education—home language—Tutor	13,000
Gloucestershire	
P/T hours	22,591
Haringey	

	£
9 Adult Education Lecturers (3·5 FTE)	53,607
6 Lecturers at Haringey College (4·1 FTE)	76,959
Hampshire	
1 Adult Education Worker	11,373
Harrow	
9·5 Lecturers—p/t hours—Harrow College of FE	194,970
Hertfordshire	
6·5 FTE Lecturers	110,300
19·5 Home tuition ESL staff	240,046
Hillingdon	
1 Adult Education Teacher	8,579
Hounslow	
3·6 Further Education Lecturers	60,120
9·5 Adult Education Lecturers	149,730
I.L.E.A.	
43·89 F.T.E. Further and Higher Education College posts	664,462
62·35 F.T.E. Adult Education Institute posts	739,977
(figures based on 1985-86 financial year as no breakdown of costs for 1986-87 is available)	
Kent	
2 p/t clerical staff—Adult education Centres	2,909
16 teaching and outreach posts in Adult Education Centres	59,048
(figures based on 1985-86 financial year as no breakdown of costs for 1986-87 is available)	
Kirklees	
3 ESL Lecturers	45,000
1 Lecturer—Social Work	18,189
4,305 p/t Lecturing hours	50,774
5,748 hours—Home Tutors	50,542
Lancashire	
8 Racial Equality Unit Staff—Lancs Polytechnic	84,400
32·42 Lecturers—Language lessons to adults	372,083
Leeds	
3 Lecturers (2 × 18 hours and 1 × 22 hours)	40,497
24 p/t Lecturing hours	11,436
1 continuing education worker	14,690
1 Lecturer E.S.L.	12,616
Leicestershire	
16 p/t teachers of English to adult immigrants	173,912
4·5 FTE teachers—Charles Keene College	66,468
1·25 p/t teachers—Charles Keene College	10,178
0·25 p/t teachers—Loughborough Technical College	2,980
Manchester	
7 Lecturers (Special courses)	89,640
1·94 p/t hours—Access course	13,280
5 Community Education	70,650
1 E.Ma Tutor	12,566
2·7 A.E. Centre Lecturers	34,700
2 Central College Lecturers	25,250
0·44 p/t Lecturers—English to adults	5,170
1·1 p/t Lecturers—E.S.L.	10,260
1·2 part time Lecturers—Community languages	8,510
1 Lecturer—M/C Education	10,990
8·7 part time—A.E. Centres	58,440
Newham	
5 Further Education Lecturers	72,709
Newcastle	
1 Senior E.S.L. Lecturer	16,762
2 E.S.L. Lecturers	29,193

	£
2 × 50 per cent. Adult education Language Tutors	10,328
Northamptonshire	
4 Adult Education Lecturers	52,850
1·4 F.T.E. Lecturers (ESL)	11,120
1·3 F.T.E. Tutors	21,480
0·5 F.T.E. Assistant Tutors	5,710
Nottinghamshire	
19 Language Centre Staff	241,359
5 ESL team teachers	58,542
Oldham	
1 ESL teacher	9,729
1 Organiser (ABEPI)	11,906
2·5 part time teachers (ABEPI)	15,928
1 Youth Leader	10,836
2·2 Ancillaries	11,731
Redbridge	
3·65 F.T.E. Lecturers in colleges of F.E. (E.S.L.) 1 Language tuition Organiser	22,900
Rochdale	
7 E.S.L. Teachers—Adult education	66,200
Rotherham	
1 Lecturer ESL	9,452
3 part time Lecturers ESL	21,312
Sandwell	
3·25 F.T.E. Lecturers in colleges of F.E. (ESL)	42,144
0·25 F.T.E. Evening Institute Lecturers	2,884
Sheffield	
39 part-time Adult Language Teachers	30,000
4,650 hours—adult education	36,200
4·35 Further education Coordinators/Tutors	51,000
South Glamorgan	
3 part-time Adult Instructors	24,065
1 Community Tutor	17,854
Staffordshire	
2·9 Asian Education Centre	25,500
Tameside	
2 Further Education Lecturers	30,656
Walsall	
2·90 F.T.E. Lecturers Adult language tuition development service	36,073
3·00 F.T.E. Lecturers Redundant workers language training	37,000
1·00 F.T.E. Lecturers College Technology language course	15,840
Waltham Forest	
103 part-time hours a week—Lecturers—Asian Family Group	62,270
4·75 part-time Lecturers—Waltham Forest College	34,370
1 Lecturer—M/C Coordinator	13,630
1·5 Lecturer—Access Courses	9,710
1 Lecturer—English to adults	8,180
1·5 Lecturer—Community Languages	8,560
2 Lecturer—Remedial Numeracy	16,610
Warwickshire	
0·9 F.T.E.—2 Lecturers—Mid Warwickshire College	13,730
1·2 F.T.E.—3 Lecturers—East Warwickshire College	17,130

	£
1,393 part-time hours Lecturers—Mid Warwickshire College	19,030
2,758 part-time hours Lecturers—North Warwickshire College	27,580
1,659 part-time hours Lecturers—East Warwickshire College	16,590
Wolverhampton	
0·47 F.T.E. Lecturers—Bilston College of F.E.	3,200
0·37 F.T.E. Lecturers—Wulfrun College of F.E.	2,600
2·56 F.T.E. Lecturers—Adult College	17,400
6 Lecturers—Basic Skills	73,800

Special Constables

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans for increasing the responsibilities of special constables: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The deployment of special constables in individual forces is a matter for chief constables, to whom we have commended the 1981 report of the second working party of the Police Advisory Board, which made suggestions for the wider and more effective use of the special constabulary. Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary look specifically at the use made of special constables when they inspect forces. There is much scope for the imaginative use of special constables, for example in crime prevention work.

Firearms

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage increase in the numbers of crimes and offences involving the use of firearms in the 10-year period ended 1965; and what were the total of convictions in courts for firearms offences or crimes and offences involving the use of firearms in the years 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985, and 1986, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Genetic Fingerprinting

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has carried out any investigations or received any reports about the use of genetic fingerprinting as part of the forensic evidence to be adduced in *(a)* cases of alleged sexual assault and *(b)* other criminal cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The technique of genetic fingerprinting, pioneered by Dr. Alec Jeffreys of Leicester university, has been further developed by scientists at the Forensic Science Service Central Research Establishment, for application to criminal cases. It has great potential for identification of suspects in particular types of cases in which body fluids have been shed. Since December 1986 the technique has been used in a small number of criminal investigations of sexual assaults and murder. Statements in these cases have been issued to the police but have not yet been adduced as evidence in a Crown Court.

Television Licences

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is given to television licence inspectors about how long should be given to someone without a television licence to obtain a licence.

Mr. Mellor: Television licence inquiry officers have written instructions to report each case in which there are grounds to suspect that a person is using television without a licence, and never to imply or indicate that prosecution may not take place if he offers to pay immediately for a licence or to obtain one within a short time. Inquiry officers have no discretion to allow time for the purchase or renewal of a licence; and decisions as to prosecution are taken in the light of their reports and other relevant circumstances.

Mr. Aurang Zeb

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the evidence of his principal officer to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in the course of his investigation into the circumstances in which Mr. Aurang Zeb was removed from the United Kingdom to Pakistan on 3 April 1986.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 March 1987, c. 472]: No: my right hon. Friend does not propose to depart from usual practice in this respect. To do so would be inconsistent with the privacy and confidentiality under which the Parliamentary Commissioner's investigations are conducted.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Advanced Further Education

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the report of the National Advisory Body for Higher and Further Education on good management practice; what other advice he will be taking before producing his plans for the future of polytechnics and colleges providing advanced further education courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I am unable to say when my right hon. Friend will receive the final report on good management practice, the timing of which is a matter for the committee of the National Advisory Body. A number of other reports have recently received publicity and bear on the constitution of polytechnics and colleges and related matters. The Government welcome the debate which has developed and have been listening to advice from all quarters.

Assisted Places

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the average full cost per pupil for all schools offering assisted places for each local education authority in England.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the answers which my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) on 22 January, at column *640*, and on 2 February at column *474*.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will present in a table *(a)* the

average net cost per pupil in 1983-84, cash, per secondary pupil at maintained secondary schools in each local authority in England and *(b)* the average expenditure in the same year per assisted place pupil to each local education authority in England.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is given in the following table:

LEA	*Average net cost £ per maintained secondary pupil (cash) (Financial Year 1983-84)*	*Average Government expenditure (£) per assisted pupil on each LEA area, (school year 1983-84)*
Barking	1,090	nil
Barnet	1,190	1,730
Bexley	1,030	nil
Brent	1,365	nil
Bromley	1,090	1,239
Croydon	1,140	1,215
Ealing	1,220	1,270
Enfield	1,055	nil
Haringey	1,475	2,052
Harrow	1,200	2,212
Havering	1,135	nil
Hillingdon	1,175	1,419
Hounslow	1,140	nil
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,055	1,387
Merton	970	1,491
Newham	1,340	nil
Redbridge	1,125	1,300
Richmond-upon-Thames	1,040	1,302
Sutton	1,000	1,161
Waltham Forest	1,305	1,625
ILEA	1,760	1,492
Birmingham	980	1,229
Coventry	1,065	1,294
Dudley	935	nil
Sandwell	1,045	nil
Solihull	915	nil
Walsall	1,055	nil
Wolverhampton	1,070	1,442
Knowsley	1,140	nil
Liverpool	1,105	1,344
St. Helens	990	nil
Sefton	985	1,221
Wirral	990	1,029
Bolton	965	1,021
Bury	1,010	794
Manchester	1,190	1,239
Oldham	925	1,050
Rochdale	1,115	nil
Salford	1,025	nil
Stockport	945	1,143
Tameside	975	nil
Trafford	965	1,092
Wigan	1,045	nil
Barnsley	990	nil
Doncaster	995	nil
Rotherham	925	nil
Sheffield	1,115	1,017
Bradford	890	1,111
Calderdale	940	nil
Kirklees	870	908
Leeds	920	1,224
Wakefield	915	1,241
Gateshead	975	nil
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,195	1,087
North Tyneside	1,060	nil
South Tyneside	1,050	nil
Sunderland	970	nil
Isles of Scilly	1,360	nil
Avon	1,020	1,284
Bedfordshire	985	2,228
Berkshire	980	1,476
Buckinghamshire	1,010	2,240
Cambridgeshire	920	1,443
Cheshire	940	1,195
Cleveland	1,005	nil
Cornwall	915	1,380
Cumbria	990	2,059
Derbyshire	950	2,092
Devon	925	1,369
Dorset	930	1,550
Durham	905	nil
East Sussex	950	1,450
Essex	955	1,847
Gloucestershire	950	2,289
Hampshire	930	1,316
Hereford and Worcester	865	1,554
Hertfordshire	1,020	1,414
Humberside	975	1,164
Isle of Wight	895	nil
Kent	895	1,665
Lancashire	940	1,156
Leicestershire	1,025	1,310
Lincolnshire	935	1,222
Norfolk	960	1,235
North Yorkshire	970	1,857
Northamptonshire	960	1,388
Northumberland	925	nil
Nottinghamshire	1,030	977
Oxfordshire	1,010	1,467
Salop	965	1,150
Somerset	890	1,534
Staffordshire	970	1,442
Suffolk	915	1,331
Surrey	965	1,619
Warwickshire	930	1,071
West Sussex	900	nil
Wiltshire	935	1,991

Research Grants

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the implications of the decision of the Science and Engineering Research Council to defer all applications for new research grants until September for scientific research in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has had talks with the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council about the council's decision to defer new applications for research grants until September. The council has taken this step in order to absorb the cost to it in 1987-88 of the recently agreed pay settlement for university academic staff. It is for the research councils to decide how best to manage their priorities, but we are discussing with them the implications of this particular settlement.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the number of places available for the training of speech therapists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Science Budget

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *660-1*, to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), if he will indicate the proportion of the total amount allocated from his Department's science budget to universities in each year since 1979 which is represented by the amount allocated to the constituent colleges of the University of Wales.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1987, c. *352*]: The information requested is as follows:

Amount allocated to the constituent colleges of the University of Wales expressed as a proportion percentage of the total amount allocated from the Science Budget to universities

	Per cent.
1979-80	4·1
1980-81	3·8
1981-82	3·9
1982-83	3·6
1983-84	3·5
1984-85	3·5
1985-86	3·7
1986-87	3·6
1987-88	3·6

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *660-1*, to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), if he will indicate the proportion of the total amount allocated from his Department's science budget to institutions other than universities in each year since 1979 which is represented by the amount allocated to such institutions in Wales.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1987, c. *353*]: The information requested is as follows:

Amount allocated to institutions in Wales expressed as a proportion per cent. of the total amount allocated from the Science Budget to institutions other than universities

	Per cent.
1979-80	7·3
1980-81	8·3
1981-82	7·9
1982-83	7·9
1983-84	6·9
1984-85	6·6
1985-86	5·9
1986-87	5·9
1987-88	6·0

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Responsibility

Q38. **Mr. Freud** asked the Prime Minister whether she intends to allocate any additional ministerial responsibility to the Minister of State, Privy Council Office and Minister for the Arts; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans to do so.

State Security

Q93. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will now refer to the Security Commission allegations of security services operations against Ministers of the Crown in the 1970s; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Prime Minister what arrangements exist in the Prime Minister's office for analysis and assessment of the provision of public services in the Greater London area following the reorganisation of London government in 1986.

The Prime Minister: Abolition of the Greater London council resulted in a transfer of its services to the London boroughs and to a number of other successor authorities. Departments make their own arrangements for the analysis and assessment of public services in London, where they are responsible for so doing.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

Mr. Duffy asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 26 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a state banquet given by King Fahd.

EC (Expenditure)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the implications for the Community of the decision of the Council of Finance Ministers on 9 March to agree to expenditure which the Court of Auditors had declared to be unlawful; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Interception of Communications (Commission Report)

Sir Edward Gardner asked the Prime Minister when the Commission appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will present its annual report; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A Copy of the 1986 annual report by Lord Justice Lloyd has been laid before this House today in accordance with section 8(7) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The confidential appendix to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 8(8) of the Act. I am grateful to the Commissioner for the thoroughness of his report and the reassurance it contains. Lord Justice Lloyd comments on the high value of the intelligence obtained from interception, and the care taken by all concerned to oberve not only the letter but also the spirit of the Act. The Commissioner's report suggests a small number of improvements to the procedures observed in dealing with these cases. These recommendations have been accepted and the improvements suggested are being implemented.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 March, *Official Report*, column *185*, if he will list United Kingdom aid used in mixed credits and less concessional tied aid loans as a percentage of gross bilateral aid commitment, for each year since the aid and trade provision was introduced.

Mr. Chris Patten: The first commitments under the aid and trade provision were made in 1978. The information requested is set out in the table

	Per cent.
1978	[1]2
1979	[1]6
1980	8
1981	12
1982	36
1983	9
1984	21
1985	5

[1] Full data in these years are not available. The figures represent aid used in mixed credit commitments only, and are approximate.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the impact of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development agreement on aid and export credits on United Kingdom aid and trade provisions.

Mr. Chris Patten: The impact of the new agreement will be that the minimum grant element for tied aid credits (including mixed credits) supported by the aid and trade provision is due to be increased to 30 per cent. from 1 July 1987 and to 35 per cent. from 1 July 1988. For the least developed countries, the minimum grant element will be 50 per cent. from 1 July 1987. I am glad to say that the grant element will be calculated in a way which more nearly reflects the cost to individual donor countries of providing such finance, which will make it more expensive for countries with low interest rate currencies.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will indicate the percentage breakdown of the £30 million provided for development projects in the Falkland Islands, including the proportion spent on *(a)* the buying of farmland for redistribution, *(b)* research, *(c)* evaluation of development projects and *(d)* administrative expenses, including visits by officials and experts.

Mr. Chris Patten: The breakdown of the £31 million development aid grant is as follows:

	Allocation *per cent.*	*Estimated expenditure to date* *per cent.*
Falkland Islands Development Corporation[1]	27	15
Power and water supply projects	25	14
Technical Co-operation	16	16
Land/farm transfer	8	7
Road and track construction projects	6	4
School hostel	4	4
Agricultural Research Centre	3	3
Miscellaneous small projects and balance awaiting firm commitment	11	[2]37
	100	100

[1] Including research and development activities.
[2] Unspent.

The technical co-operation allocation provides for the cost of manpower assistance, including the cost of those involved in the evaluation of projects. Departmental administrative expenses are not funded from the grant.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what financial aid is given by the Welsh Development Agency to Irish shipping lines and why; and what financial aid is given to Sealink.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Welsh Development Agency has not given financial assistance to an Irish shipping line or to Sealink, although the agency is involved in measures designed to assist the development of the port facilities at Holyhead for the benefit of all users, including shipping interests.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what applications for additional funds his Department has received from Gwynedd health authority to meet the unexpected additional cost burdens placed upon it in providing a new flagpost, flags, flowers, carpets and associated expenditure relating to the official opening of Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

Welsh Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is now in a position to announce the membership of the Welsh Health Promotion Authority.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I announced on 26 February that Dr. Simon Smail had accepted an invitation to become chairman of the new authority. I can now announce that the following have accepted an invitation to become members.

Miss Carol Charlesworth
Mr. Alan Crabbe
Mr. Gerald Davies
Dr. John Evans
Dr. Denis Francis
Mr. Hywel Griffiths
Professor Ray Hodgson
Councellor Thomas Jones
Dr. Beverley Littlepage
Miss Elizabeth Muir
Mr. Seth Roberts
Miss Eileen Rossiter
Miss Sandra Sandham
Mr. James Thomas

A copy of the press release giving details has been placed in the Library of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Accommodation

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Lord Privy Seal how many right hon. and hon. Gentlemen officially occupy offices in Upper Committee Corridor North in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: Forty-one right hon. and hon. Gentlemen occupy offices in Upper Committee Corridor, North.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Lord Privy Seal how many right hon. and hon. Ladies officially occupy offices in Upper Committee Corridor North in the palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: None.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) how many male research assistants or secretaries wholly operate from rooms in Upper Committee Corridor North which have been allocated for the use of right hon. and hon. Members;

(2) how many female research assistants or secretaries wholly operate from rooms in Upper Committee Corridor North which have been allocated for the use of right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: No information is available to indicate how many secretaries and research assistants wholly operate from hon. Members' offices. Two male and three female secretaries or research assistants operate from rooms allocated for this purpose on the Upper Committee Corridor North.

ENERGY

Nuclear Fusion

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Energy, following the announcement of the International Atomic Energy Authority concerning a joint research programme towards constructing the world's first nuclear fusion reactor with the active co-operation of the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Japan and the 12 European Economic Community countries, what contribution Her Majesty's Government are providing for this project.

Mr. Goodlad: A group of experts has been set up to discuss further the possibility of collaboration. The United Kingdom will contribute to the discussions as a member of Euratom.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Peter Walker: Surveys of the ethnic origins of staff in post and new entrants to my Department are being carried out on the basis of voluntary self-classification. This is in accordance with arrangements agreed between the Management and Personnel Office and the Council of Civil Service Unions.

Of the new entrants to my Department during the period 1 October 1985 to 1 February 1987, 14 per cent. failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Results of the surveys carried out in my Department will be included in the reports to be published by the Management and Personnel Office. I have no plans to publish figures for my Department separately.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received seeking privatisation of the electricity supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received a number of representations on this matter. The Government have no present plans to privatise the electricity supply industry.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to designate the job training scheme as approved training for the purposes of section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the total work force in the north-west region are now employed in manufacturing industries; and what was the comparative 1979 figure.

Mr. Lee: Estimates of the labour force in manufacturing industries in regions are not available, as the self-employed statistics are not analysed in this way.

In September 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, 21 per cent. of the total civilian working population, which is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed and the unemployed, in the north-west region were employees in employment in manufacturing industries. The comparable figure for September 1979 was 31 per cent.

Some of the decrease in the number of employees in employment in manufacturing will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, computer services and road haulage, previously done by manufacturer's own employees and now done by subcontractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment.

Greater London (Services)

Mr. Squire asked the Paymaster General what arrangements exist within his Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisation, for dealing with his responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Mr. Lee: Greater London is one of 10 regions in the regional directorate structure of the Manpower Services Commission. There is a regional director for employment and enterprise and one for vocational education and training. Some 2,200 staff are employed in delivering services to Greater London. It is also one of nine regions for the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service with approximately 100 staff and its own regional director. In the unemployment benefit service, since 1984 Greater London has been served by two of its nine regions—southern region extending south of the Thames and eastern region extending north of the Thames. Some 4,400 of the staff of these two regional benefit managers are involved in providing services in Greater London.

Some field staff of the Health and Safety Executive, principally in the Factory Inspectorate, are based in the area offices in north and south London. Other services provided by my Department (and by the Health and Safety Executive) for Greater London are managed centrally, although there are local or sub-regional offices in London for redundancy payments, the Wages Inspectorate, Employment Agency, licensing, had the Careers Service Inspectorate. Any further breakdown of staffing numbers would involve national attributions and would not be on the same basis as the figures quoted above.

Mr. Squire asked the Paymaster General with which Departments and non-departmental bodies his Department and its related non-departmental public bodies has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Lee: The Department of Employment, the Manpower Services Commission and the Health and Safety Executive are continuously in touch with a range of other Government Departments and non-departmental bodies regarding services within Greater London as in the rest of Great Britain. A wide range of issues is discussed.

Mr. Squire asked the Paymaster General whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Mr. Lee: There are no such proposals.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received about discrimination against self-employed disabled people who apply for assistance under the enterprise allowance scheme; if he has any plans to alter the scheme to facilitate their use of it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have received no general representations about discrimination against self-employed disabled people who apply for the enterprise allowance scheme, although individuals have written concerning their particular problems. Disabled people who fulfil the eligibility conditions for this scheme are treated in the same way as any other unemployed people. Disabled people wishing to become self-employed can also benefit from the range of Manpower Services Commission schemes designed to help overcome their specific work-related problems.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will provide in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage change in employment in the chemical, transport equipment, textile, mechanical engineering and metal-working industries between, respectively, 1974 and 1979 and 1974 and the latest available quarter, in the case of the United Kingdom and showing such information as he has for Germany, France, Italy, the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Lee: Estimates of the total numbers employed in the United Kingdom in the industries specified are not available as the self-employed statistics are not analysed in the degree of detail required. The available information for the United Kingdom is as follows:

Employees in employment: United Kingdom

	Net changes between June 1974 and June 1979	*Net changes between June 1974 and September 1986*[1]
	Per cent.	*Per cent.*
Chemical industry (25)[2]	1	−17
Manufacture of other transport equipment (36)	−7	−30
Textile industry (43)	−20	−48
Mechanical engineering (32)	−3	−33
Manufacture of metal goods not elsewhere specified (31)	−10	−47

[1] The latest date for which United Kingdom estimates are available.

[2] The figures in parenthesis indicate the class of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

Comparative information is readily available only from 1980, for the member of the European Community, and for slightly different industry groupings.

The following table shows the percentage changes up to the latest available quarter.

Percentage changes in employment between 1980 and the 1st quarter of 1986

	United Kingdom	*Germany*	*France*	*Italy*
Chemical industry (25 and 26)	−17	−2	−8	−30
Transport equipment (35 and 36)	−31	+3	n.a.	−28
Textiles (43)	−22	−24	−19	−27
Mechanical engineering (32)	−26	−4	−18	−25
Metal-working industries (31 to 36)	−27	−3	−16	−27

[1] The figures in parenthesis indicate the class of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification.

n.a. Not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list the number of employees in 1981 and in 1984, and any estimate he has for 1986, and the numbers employed in *(a)* manufacturing, *(b)* construction, *(c)* metal manufacturing, and *(d)* engineering and allied industries in each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom.

(2) if he will list the net jobs loss for *(a)* all employees, *(b)* employees in manufacturing and construction *(c)* employees in manufacturing, *(d)* employees in engineering

and allied industries and *(e)* employees in metal manufacturing, and the percentage fall, from June 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available for (i) Greater London, (ii) Birmingham, (iii) Liverpool, (iv) Manchester, (v) Newcastle, (vi) Glasgow, (vii) Cardiff, (viii) Bristol, (ix) Coventry, (x) Leicester, (xi) Bradford, (xii) Edinburgh, (xiii) Dundee and (xiv) Swansea.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will publish the preliminary results of his study into the reallocation of responsibility for benefits for the unemployed;

(2) if he is investigating the feasibility of imposing any new work test or conditions for the payment of unemployment benefit;

(3) if he is considering proposals or investigating the feasibility of depriving unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds of the right to claim supplementary benefit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Workfare

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if any Manpower Services Commission officials are studying the United States experience of workfare; and if any have paid visits to the United States.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Departmental Section UB 9

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the responsibilities of his Department's section UB 9.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Butcher: There are no plans at present to change from the voluntary self-classification system of gathering ethnic origin information about Civil Service staff. I would refer the hon. Lady to the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave her today on this point. Of 1,739 new entrants to the Department since October 1985, 850 (49 per cent.) have not yet responded to the questionnaire.

Companies (Research and Development)

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend the Companies Act 1985 to oblige limited companies to publish their yearly expenditure on research and development in their annual results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I support disclosure in company accounts of expenditure on research and development as likely to increase awareness of its importance to the economy. However, I have no present plans for legislation on the matter as the Accounting Standards Committee is currently undertaking work on producing a statement of standard accounting practice which would require disclosure of such expenditure in company accounts.

Nationalisation Compensation

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the compensation paid by Her Majesty's Government to stockholders of *(a)* Messrs. Kincaid, *(b)* Vosper and *(c)* Brooke Marine; what information he has as to what was shown under the item "cash" in each of those company's accounts at the time of nationalisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The companies' balance sheets at the vesting date, 1 July 1977, showed the following:

	£
John G. Kincaid and Co.	
Bank balances and cash on hand	3,305,787
Brooke Marine Ltd.	
Bank and cash	2,192,000
A special balance sheet for the nationalised business of Vosper Ltd. showed:	
Bank balances and cash	5,466,000

The compensation paid to stockholders, which in accordance with the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977 was negotiated by reference to the value of the shares during a period of six months ending on 28 February 1974, was as follows:

	£
John G. Kincaid and Co.	3,927,000
Vosper Companies	5,300,000
Brooke Marine Ltd.	1,800,000

My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Industry on 7 August 1980 announced that the Government had reluctantly come to the conclusion that there was no satisfactory way to alter the 1977 compensation terms.

Fireworks

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will introduce legislation to prohibit unlicensed traders from selling fireworks and to ensure that unlicensed retailers are not supplied with fireworks by wholesalers;

(2) if he has any plans to improve the level of enforcement of the Fireworks Safety Regulations 1986 *(a)* relating to the release of information about holders of explosives licences from the fire authority and *(b)* in detecting unlicensed traders during the period when fireworks are sold to the public.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Lady as soon as possible.

Secondhand Car Dealers

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received calling for trading standards officers to be able to prosecute secondhand car dealers for trading standards offences without first receiving a complaint; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have received no representations calling for trading standards officers to have powers to prosecute secondhand car dealers under general trading standards legislation without first receiving a complaint. Such legislation, for example the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, generally empowers trading standards officers to investigate possible offences on their own initiative.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what research is currently being carried out to look for alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Considerable research has been undertaken in the United Kingdom and elsewhere into alternatives to chlorofluorocarbons. This research continues, but it is not a simple or quick process to develop suitable replacement chemicals and then manufacture them in commercial quantities to consumer satisfaction.

DEFENCE

Leyland Trucks

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations were carried out with his Department prior to the decision to merge Leyland Trucks with DAF.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department was consulted appropriately on its military truck interests prior to the merger announcement.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's heavy truck procurement policy following the decision to close the Scammell works at Watford after the merger of Leyland Trucks with DAF.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The closure of the Scammell works at Watford is not expected to affect the Department's procurement policy for heavy trucks or other vehicles. Suitable arrangements are in hand to ensure the orderly redisposition of all existing Defence vehicle contracts held by Scammell within the restructured Leyland organisation.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are being made to ensure the supply of parts and maintenance for trucks purchased by his Department from Leyland vehicles following the merger with DAF.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The merger of Leyland and DAF is not expected to affect the continued availability and supply of parts for service vehicles purchased previously from Leyland or its subsidiaries.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Shore asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the range of the SS21, SS22 and SS23 missiles; and about how many are deployed in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, respectively.

Mr. Stanley: Detailed assessments of the ranges and deployments are classified. I am able to provide the following approximate figures:

Warsaw Pact SS21, SS12/22, SS23 deployments in East Germany and Czechoslovakia

Type	*Maximum range km*	*Number of missile launchers*
SS-21 (Scarab)	90	100
SS-12 Mod 2 (Scaleboard B)	900	50
SS-23 (Spider)	500	0

Notes:

(a) All the above missiles are land mobile and can be moved relatively speedily between the Western military districts of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

(b) The missile launchers for each of these missiles can fire reload missiles, the number of which in each category is classified.

(c) Scaleboard B is an improved accuracy missile for the SS-12 system, and was formerly referred to as the "SS-22".

(d) In addition to the SS21, SS12/22, and SS23 missiles referred to in the table the Warsaw Pact has substantial numbers of the older Frog and Scud mobile ballistic missiles deployed in eastern Europe.

SCOTLAND

Community Charge

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how the current product of domestic rates in Scotland and in Fife might be raised through community charge or a local income tax, with and without equalisation, in the cases of *(a)* a single person on an average manual worker's wage and *(b)* a married man on an average manual worker's wage, whose wife's earnings are the average for women in full-time employment.

Mr. Ancram: The estimated average local tax bills under the community charge system and under a local income tax system with and without resource equalisation needed to replace domestic rates in 1985-86, are given in the following table for the specific cases requested.

	Scotland		*Fife*		
	Community charge	*Local income tax*	*Community charge*	*Local income tax*	
				With resource equalisation	*Without resource equalisation*
	£	£	£	£	£
Case (a)					
A single person on Scottish average earnings for a full-time male adult manual worker	207	361	210	367	272
Case (b)					
A married man with earnings as in case *(a)*, whose wife's earnings are the Scottish average for adult women in full-time work	414	517	420	516	390

Notes:

1. The underlying local income tax rates (with resource equalisation) have been estimated on the assumption that some form of resource equalisation would make the yield of 1p in the £ the same per adult in all areas.
2. In applying local income tax rates to cases *(a)* and *(b)* it is assumed that earnings are the only sources of income and that only personal tax allowances apply.
3. Published information on taxable resources in local authority areas is only available up to 1982-83. The sample size is small and the regional pattern shows considerable variation from year to year. Estimates of local income tax rates without resource equalisation are therefore subject to some uncertainty. Those in the table have been produced by applying the pattern of unequalised tax rates calculated for 1982-83 to 1985-86 average earnings.

Locate in Scotland (Director)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what terms Professor Neil Hood has been appointed as Director of Locate in Scotland; and on what criteria he was selected for the post.

Mr. Rifkind: Professor Hood has been appointed as Director, Locate in Scotland, on secondment from Strathclyde university, initially for a period of two years. He has been certificated as a civil servant and his salary of £35,000 per year includes a contribution from the Scottish Development Agency in respect of his wider role as a director of that body.

Professor Hood was selected from among a number of candidates on the usual criteria of ability, experience and knowledge in relation to the specific post under consideration.

Outer City Estates

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the effects of current Government policies on the residents of outer city estates in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The Government's policy is to encourage the breaking down of the large single-tenure peripheral housing estates into smaller communities where the residents have a real tenure choice. In a number of areas significant progress is being achieved through, for exmple, joint ventures involving housing associations, building societies and private sector developers, through low cost home ownership initiatives, and through greater tenant involvement, including the development of management and ownership co-operatives. These polices are having a considerable effect in regenerating estates such as Whitfield, Dundee, and in improving the quality of life for the residents in these areas.

Prison Disturbances

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received representations from Jimmy Boyle of the Gateway Exchange, Edinburgh, about an inquiry into the Scottish prison disturbances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Boyle wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend on 23 February about a questionnaire which Gateway Exchange had sent to certain prisoners in Scottish penal establishments. This questionnaire was said to be part of an inquiry which Gateway Exchange proposed to conduct on conditions in Scottish prisons.

My Department had not been notified or asked about the questionnaire before it was sent to individual prisoners. I do not regard Gateway Exchange as having any special locus, nor have I any expectation that such an inquiry would be pertinent.

Community Programme (Lothian and the Borders)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received representations from Edinburgh and district trades council about the number of places available on the community programme in Lothian and the Borders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No representations have been received by my Department from the Edinburgh and district trades council concerning the number of Community Programme places which are available in Lothian and the Borders.

The community programme continues to be successful in meeting its principal objective of providing a year's work experience for as many long-term unemployed people as possible within the available resources, thereby increasing their chances of finding a permanent job.

Abortions

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown by health boards of private clinics licensed for abortion operations; and if he will state, in each case, the owner of the clinic and its registered company address.

Mr. John MacKay: The names and addresses of the places approved by my right hon and learned Friend for the purposes of section 1 of the Abortion Act 1967 are as follows. Information on ownership is provided to my right hon. and learned Friend by applicants for approval but this information is not intended for publication. The hon. Member should approach the approved places direct for this information.

Health Board	*Name of approved place*	*Address of approved place*
Dumfries and Galloway	Moat Brae Nursing Home	George Street, Dumfries
Forth Valley	Stirling and District Nursing Home	18 Park Terrace, Stirling
Grampian	The St. John Nursing Home	21 Albyn Place, Aberdeen
Greater Glasgow	The Nuffield McAlpin Clinic	Beaconsfield Road, Glasgow
Greater Glasgow	Ross Hall Hospital	221 Crookston Road, Glasgow
Lothian	Murrayfield Hospital	122 Corstorphine Road, Edinburgh
Tayside	Fernbrae Private Clinic	329 Perth Road, Dundee

Jordanhill College of Education

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he or his officials have had with Glasgow district council *(a)* before or *(b)* since the publication of his consultative document on the governing bodies of colleges of education in respect of the retention of the town and gown link between the district council and Jordanhill college of education board of governors.

Mr. John MacKay: There have been no such discussions although written representations have been received from the district council. The Colleges of Education (Scotland) Regulations which come into effect on 1 April provide for the local authority governors of all colleges of education to be drawn from the membership of the education committees of regional or islands councils.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the hospital waiting list figures for *(a)* Fife and *(b)* Scotland for the latest date for which figures are available, and for each year since May 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested, which relates to 30 September, follows:

	Fife	*Scotland*
1979	4,617	71,247
1980	4,245	67,387
1981	3,974	65,228
1982	6,857	86,365
1983	6,477	88,338
1984	6,127	83,077
1985	5,816	77,677
[1]1986	5,468	80,862

[1] Provisional.

The increases in 1982 and 1983 reflect the effect of industrial action.

Redundancies

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many redundancies have been reported to him in each month of 1986 and 1987 for which figures are now available.

Mr. Lang: There are no comprehensive statistics on redundancies. The table shows information on the number of redundancies involving 10 or more workers confirmed to the Manpower Services Commission as occurring in Scotland in each month during the period from January 1986 to February 1987.

Year/Month	*Confirmed Redundancies*
1986 January	1,910
February	2,263
March	3,007
April	3,412
May	2,523
June	3,457
July	2,842
August	2,268
September	1,971
October	2,574
November	1,352
December	2,004
1987 January	1,396
February	881

All figures given may be subject to amendment. Figures for January and February of this year are as at March 1 1987, and final figures are expected to be higher than those given.

Community Programme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the figures for community programme places in Scotland in 1986-87, and both provisional and new figures for 1987-88 for Fife and Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The average number of filled places on the community programme in Fife and Scotland during 1986-87, and the corresponding provisional figures for 1987-88, are shown in the table below.

Community Programme—Average Filled Places

Area	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Fife	[1]1,793	1,750
Scotland	[1]30,990	30,910

[1] 1986-87 average based on April 1986-February 1987.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish *(a)* by postal area and *(b)* local government electoral district for Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy districts the numbers unemployed, both men and women, on March 1987, or the most recent date for which figures are available, and the corresponding figures for March 1986, June 1983 and May 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the precise form requested.

The following tables show the number of male and female unemployed claimants in each electoral ward in the Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy local authority districts for June 1983 (the earliest date for which such information can be provided), March 1986 and February 1987 (the latest date available).

Dunfermline Local Authority District

Ward Name	*Unemployed Claimants*					
	June 1983		*March 1986*		*February 1987*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Ballingry	259	84	415	136	403	116
Blacklaw/St. Leonards	91	61	119	50	126	67
Blairhall/High Valleyfield	230	101	244	98	289	78
Cairneyhill/Crossford	35	47	54	97	81	79
Cowdenbeath Foulford	102	77	188	106	213	103
Cowdenbeath Moss-Side	161	90	167	125	262	112
Cowdenbeath South East	93	50	135	62	174	67
Crossgate/Hill of Beath	63	44	115	57	109	54
Dalgety Bay East/Aberdour	82	63	104	66	94	79
Dalgety Bay West/North Queensferry	53	60	97	106	104	94
Dunfermline Central	94	49	111	73	158	91
Dunfermline North 1	80	35	80	47	90	42
Wellwood/Milesmark/Dunfermline North 2	63	35	101	31	113	61
Dunfermline West	76	62	137	79	153	85
Dunfermline/Aberdour	133	59	156	52	159	62
Dunfermline Garvock	60	52	73	62	82	66
Dunfermline/Limburn	187	92	183	92	224	100
Dunfermline/Pitcorthie	35	35	49	91	62	71
Dunfermline/Woodmill	205	74	242	69	246	66
Inverkeithing East	136	77	210	73	205	92
Inverkeithing West	106	146	98	130	96	158
Kelty East/West	99	63	172	85	164	60
Kincardine/Culross	126	76	174	67	208	59
Limekilns/Dunfermline/Pitreavie West	96	38	101	31	134	46
Lochgelly North	129	60	202	85	195	86
Lochgelly South	120	50	216	92	194	84
Lochore	180	58	254	86	257	86
Oakfield/Lumphinnans	171	83	230	96	262	84
Oakley North/Saline	113	50	137	70	158	53
Oakley South/Torryburn	119	71	139	72	196	64
Rosyth East	115	65	126	85	150	93
Rosyth South	46	53	68	72	93	65
Rosyth West	61	41	107	64	116	69
Townhill/Kingseat/Halbeath	114	65	161	86	194	90
Total	3,834	2,208	5,293	2,733	5,736	2,684

Kirkcaldy Local Authority District

Ward name	*Unemployed Claimants*					
	June 1983		*March 1986*		*February 1987*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Aberhill/Methil	139	80	191	99	229	94
Auchmuty	265	149	353	146	308	139
Bennochy	116	48	137	54	153	52
Burntisland West	140	92	227	121	257	109
Cardenden	145	78	234	90	227	79
Denbeath and Savoy	163	88	230	113	205	94
Dunnikier	172	73	231	70	239	54
Dunnikier	32	53	70	79	74	77
Dysart/Wemyss	149	62	217	77	196	90
East Wemyss and Muiredge	155	90	228	76	175	70
Fair Isle	163	85	208	82	218	110
Gallatown/Thornton	96	62	206	103	183	101
Glenwood North	209	116	268	116	249	106
Glenwood West	153	102	177	110	162	93
Hayfield	152	65	215	76	218	81
Kennoway	200	101	233	76	171	81
Kinghorn-Burntisland East	121	68	161	78	139	95

Ward name	Unemployed Claimants June 1983 Male	June 1983 Female	March 1986 Male	March 1986 Female	February 1987 Male	February 1987 Female
Kinglassie/Bowhill	181	93	279	116	286	93
Kirkland/Mountfauvie	293	129	291	91	294	133
Leslie	142	62	184	89	154	99
Leven East	101	45	140	73	174	82
Leven West	267	112	248	112	234	108
Linktown/Auchtertool	200	86	232	104	235	92
Methilhill	260	114	310	106	317	96
North Glenrothes/Markinch/Star	255	214	408	261	417	266
Old Buckhaven	155	90	260	84	215	83
Pathhead/Victoria	140	75	189	97	216	101
Pitteuchar	95	84	131	83	116	83
Raith	46	37	59	58	83	65
Rimbleton	131	104	149	94	136	104
Sinclairtown	170	79	247	135	271	114
Staveton	176	68	203	64	208	76
South Parks	123	77	170	92	144	76
Staveton/Balgonie	97	98	134	101	140	99
Torbain	123	66	179	84	175	82
Valley	234	87	279	101	267	93
Windygates	119	78	161	100	182	106
Woodside	143	74	183	81	171	76
Total	6,021	3,284	8,059	3,702	7,858	3,656

Due to changes in the compilation of the statistics during the intervening period these figures are not directly comparable.

Corresponding figures for postal codes are not available as they cannot readily be linked to local authority districts which are defined in terms of wards.

This information is available in the Library.

Home Helps

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the latest figure for the number of home helps per 1,000 old people for each regional council area.

Mr. John MacKay: Provisional information as requested is as follows:

Region/Islands Council Area	Number of Home Helps[1]
Borders	5·4
Central	12·5
Dumfries and Galloway	9·7
Fife	15·4
Grampian	10·2
Highland	8·5
Lothian	13·9
Strathclyde	15·3
Tayside	9·4
Orkney	20·1
Shetland	14·7
Western Isles	30·3

[1] Whole-time equivalent as at 31 March 1986 per 1,000 population aged 65 or over.

Devolution

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any conversations have taken place with the interested parties at the invitation of the Government on the matter of Scottish devolution since June 1983.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

Forestry (Plantings)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Forestry Commission will consult formally with the Nature Conservancy Council over its proposed plantings at Dyke/Strath Halladale and Tarsuach Hill before any further plantings take place.

Mr. John MacKay: Yes.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the proportion of coniferous and of broadleaved trees proposed to be planted in each of the forestry grant schemes approved in Sutherland and Caithness in each year from 1981 to date.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. As the hon. Member will appreciate, conditions in this part of Scotland are generally unsuitable for growing broadleaved woodland. Under the Government's broadleaves policy, introduced in 1985, however, the Forestry Commission seeks to achieve a broadleaf element of at least 5 per cent. under the Forestry Grant Scheme and to encourage pure broadleaved planting under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme, subject to site conditions being appropriate.

Forestry Commission (Land Holdings)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names and areas of land held by the Forestry Commission in the districts of Sutherland and Caithness which are considered unplantable.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost, since there are many areas, large and small, of unplantable land scattered throughout the Commission's forests in these districts.

Senile Dementia

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the reason why persons

suffering from senile dementia in the Banff and Buchan constituency are being placed in a mental hospital instead of a normal hospital ward; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Decisions about the hospitals in which patients from Banff and Buchan are treated involve issues of clinical judgment and it would not be appropriate for my right hon. and learned Friend to investigate such matters.

Cottage Hospital, Peterhead

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to build a new cottage hospital in Peterhead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Grampian health board has included proposals to upgrade or replace the Peterhead cottage hospital in its capital plan. These works are provisionally scheduled to commence in 1991, as the board is meantime concentrating on increasing the provision of long-stay accommodation in line with national priorities.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will investigate the situation at Peterhead cottage hospital where there is no weekday evening or Saturday and Sunday cover for casualty cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I understand that Grampian health board ensures that a general practitioner is on call at all times to provide 24-hour, 7-day-a-week cover for emergency casualty cases.

Food Aid

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that those areas, such as the Banff and Buchan constituency, which did not receive adequate supplies of EEC butter, milk and cheese for distribution to the elderly and the unemployed will not be penalised by the fact that the scheme is due to end on 31 March; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will investigate as a matter of urgency the reason why there was a shortage of supplies for the EEC issue of butter, milk and cheese in the Banff and Buchan constituency; what arrangements will be made to meet the deficiency and issue supplies to the elderly and the unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The assessment of needs in particular areas has been a matter for the charities involved, who have been responsible for ordering and distributing such quantities of foodstuffs as they have felt able to handle. They are to be warmly congratulated for the efforts they have made, and I have no plans to institute any alternative arrangements, or to seek an extension of the scheme beyond 31 March.

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he anticipates that the voluntary organisations will be reimbursed their distribution costs from the EEC arising out of the issue of butter, milk and cheese to the elderly and the unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Certain costs for the packaging of foodstuffs and their delivery to the charities are, within limits, reimbursable. Provided all the necessary documentation is sent to the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce, payment is being made as quickly as is practicable, and generally within a week.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radioactivity (Cumbria)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 12 March, *Official Report*, column *304*, when his Department first initiated tests in Cumbria for a range of radionuclides, including caesium, in the potential human food chain, and other environmental materials.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Such tests were initiated by my Department in the early 1950s.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 12 March, *Official Report*, column *304*, whether he will state the number of tests his Department carried out for radionuclide levels in Cumbria between May 1985 and May 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In Cumbria, during the period 1 May 1985 to 30 April 1986, my Department carried out over 700 tests for radionuclide levels in the agricultural and terrestrial environment and over 1,000 tests for levels in the aquatic environment.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 12 March, *Official Report*, column *304*, whether he will list the range of foods and other environmental materials which were being tested for radionuclide levels in Cumbria prior to Chernobyl.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The range of foods and other environmental materials being tested prior to the Chernobyl accident included milk, fruit, vegetables, eggs, honey, cereals, cattle, sheep, rabbits, grass, rootmat, soil, fish, shellfish, seaweed, beach and harbour sediment, fishing gear, seawater and air.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Venous Leg Ulcers

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has issued guidance to *(a)* district health authorities or *(b)* family practitioner committees on policy towards arrangements for the treatment of venous leg ulcers;

(2) what is his policy towards the provision of services for the treatment of leg ulcers in the light of the "Survey on Leg Ulcers" published by the *Journal of District Nursing*, a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mrs. Currie: Provision of services and arrangements for medical treatment, including that for leg ulcers, are matters for local decision by district health authorities in consultation with the practitioners concerned. Central guidance is not considered to be appropriate.

Health education about symptoms and prevention as proposed by the *Journal of District Nursing* will, from 1 April 1987, be a matter for the Health Education Authority which will wish to consider its policies and priorities in the field of health education.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what routine indications he receives from district and regional health authorities concerning the length and time scale of waiting lists for out-patients' treatment.

Mr. Newton: I regret that out-patient waiting list information is not held centrally.

Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the savings in benefits in the next financial year of raising the single and married allowances for both income tax and national insurance contributions to £2,500 and £5,000, respectively; if he will provide an estimate of the number of adults and children taken out of benefit under the various headings; and how many would remain in receipt of benefit as a result of also raising child benefit to £15 and making it taxable.

Mr. Major: There would be a negligible effect on benefit expenditure and eligibility to benefit in 1987-88 as a result of changes in tax allowances, or changes in national insurance contributions in that year (there is, in any event, no single or married allowance for such contributions). It would be disproportionately costly to estimate the effect of raising child benefit to £15 and making it taxable.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average amount received per household in supplementary benefit in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Lyell: In February 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the average weekly amount of supplementary benefit per claimant in Scotland was £26·79. Some households contain more than one claimant. No information is available about average amounts of supplementary benefit in Strathclyde or Greenock and Port Glasgow or about average amounts per household in Scotland.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many prosecutions have taken place for fraudulent claims for supplementary benefit in each year since 1979; and if he will list the numbers, and total costs of fraud investigation, including special investigation, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lyell: The numbers of prosecutions undertaken by the Department for fraudulent claims for supplementary benefit are as follows:

	Number
1979-80	14,588
1980-81	15,837
1981-82	12,260
1982-83	10,693
1983-84	5,753
1984-85	6,480
1985-86	6,537

Information relating to the total numbers of fraud investigations is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It may be helpful, however, to indicate the numbers of cases in which fraud was established. Results are available from 1980 and are shown in the table together with the estimated staff costs for each year.

	Number	*£ million*
1980-81	78,558	29·6
1981-82	73,141	34·0
1982-83	92,061	33·9
1983-84	95,690	36·7
1984-85	83,047	39·0
1985-86	92,839	42·0

Mr. Frud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of single people under the age of 25 years who live independently and claim benefit in Cambridgeshire, North-East.

Mr. Lyell: I regret this information is not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons have been deprived of unemployment or supplementary benefit for *(a)* refusing offers of employment and *(b)* voluntarily leaving employment in each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of people disqualified for unemployment benefit under Section 20(1)*(b)* of the Social Security Act 1975 because of refusal or failure to apply for a situation or refusal to accept that situation when offered and the number disqualified under Section 20(1)*(a)* because of voluntarily leaving employment.

Year	*Section 20(1)(b)*	*Section 20(1)(a)*
1979	6,954	409,490
1980	7,950	344,403
1981	4,071	241,074
1982	2,181	248,280
1983	1,467	257,289
1985	1,503	295,041
1986	1,385	227,986

Notes:
(1) The figures for 1984 are not available.
(2) The 1986 figures are for January to September inclusive.

The number of people in receipt of supplementary benefit subject to a voluntary unemployment deduction under regulation 8 of the Supplementary Benefit Requirements Regulations 1983, as a consequence of disqualification under section 20(1)*(b)* or section 20(1)*(a)*, is not available.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to take to increase the level of uptake of means-tested benefits.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 March 1987, c. *73*]: The Government ensure a wide distribution of leaflets, claim forms and information sheets. Many of these have been redesigned to make them more easily understood, and many have been translated for use by claimants from ethnic minority groups.

In addition, the Department ensures that advice reaches as many potential beneficiaries as possible by identifying the most effective and practical means of communication. For example, supplementary benefit claim forms are issued routinely to all retirement pensioners, widows, unemployed claimants and sickness benefit claimants. Families with children are alerted to the existence of family income supplement by means of an insert in child benefit allowance books.

The nationwide "Freefone" service gives the public free telephone access to experienced staff who are able to give advice to inquiries on a wide range of social security matters. It handled 600,000 calls during the past year.

There are also a wide variety of initiatives taken at regional and local levels to promote awareness of the benefits available. In addition to the regional information officers, many local offices have appointed their own local information officers. Staff are encouraged to co-operate with responsible and well organised local authority take-up campaigns.

Wherever possible the opportunity is taken by local offices to send representatives to meetings, to give talks to people who come into contact with potential claimants, and to participate in radio and television programmes giving advice and information on benefits.

The Government are also seeking to make the social security system more easily understood—this is one of the basic principles underlying the changes introduced in the Social Security Act 1986.

To help ensure a better public awareness of the benefits system, we shall be explaining these changes as clearly as possible in the coming months. This will be achieved through a comprehensive communications strategy, and, with the help of professional advice, we shall be revising many forms and leaflets to make them easier for the public to understand.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the departmental budget devoted to promoting increased uptake of means-tested benefits.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 March 1987, c. *73*]: The Department's planned budget for publicising social security is £6·7 million for 1986-87.

Families (Benefits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the number of families on family income supplement and the number with children, *(b)* the number of one-parent families drawing the special allowance, *(c)* the number of families on unemployment benefit drawing social security and the number with children, *(d)* the number of other families on social security and the number with children, *(e)* the number of families paid other kinds of dependency addition and *(f)* the number of children covered by each of the foregoing categories.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Severe Weather Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims were received by the Greenock and Port Glasgow Department of Health and Social Security supplementary benefit office for single payments in respect of the exceptionally severe weather in January; how many of these claims have been processed; and how many are outstanding.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. However, up to 10 March 1987—the latest date for which figures are available—the Greenock and Port Glasgow local offices had made approximately 17,000 exceptionally cold weather £5 payments.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of claimants at the Greenock and Port Glasgow Department of Health and Social Security supplementary benefit offices who were entitled to exceptionally severe weather payments actually claimed for the payments in January of this year.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Diabetics (Novo Pen)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if disposable needles for diabetics using the Novo Pen will be available free.

Mrs. Currie: The Novo Pen insulin injecting devices and the disposable needles for use with them are already available free to diabetics who require them on clinical grounds through the hospital service.

Doctors and Nurses

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to improve the pay and conditions of service of doctors and nurses in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The pay of National Health Service doctors and nurses is currently under consideration by the independent review bodies who will report to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in due course. The pay levels now in force incorporate all review body recommendations made in the lifetime of this Government. Conditions of service are discussed regularly with the professions concerned in the appropriate negotiating fora. Topics under consideration include, for doctors, the introduction of a new hospital intermediate level service grade and, for nurses, a review of the clinical grading structure.

Mentally Handicapped Patients (Guardians)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider making provision for the appointment of a guardian for a mentally handicapped patient where the parents are unable to exercise that function; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: There are powers under the Mental Health Act 1983 to place under guardianship mentally impaired people who have reached the age of 16, if it is necessary in their interests or for the protection of others. Mentally impaired children under 16 may, in appropriate circumstances, be received into the care of a local authority under Section 2 of the Child Care Act 1980 or placed in the care of a local authority under a care order if the criteria in Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 are satisfied. A review of the law relating to children is currently under way and we will keep under review the need for any further measures in the interests of mentally handicapped adults.

Retirement Pensioners

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the sterling value of basic state retirement pensions to a single person and a married couple in each of the European Economic Community member states.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Pensioners (Benefits)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners, and what percentage have (i) other state benefits than retirement pensions, (ii) occupational pensions, (iii) state earnings-related pensions and (iv) income from savings which is in each case *(a)* £0-£1 to £5 per week, *(b)* £5-£10 per week, *(c)* £10-£20 per week, *(d)* £20-£30 per week, *(e)* £30-£40 per week, *(f)* £40-£50 per week, *(g)* £50-£60 per week, *(h)* £60-£70 per week, *(i)* £70-£80 per week, *(j)* £80-£90 per week, *(k)* £90-£100 per week and *(l)* more than £100 per week.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Low-calorie Diets

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) has completed its report on very low calorie diets; and when he expects to publish it.

Mrs. Currie: Preparation of the report is not yet complete. No publication date has been fixed.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his latest estimate of the total number of claims for mobility allowance refused on grounds of age at the latest available date; and what consideration he has given to raising the upper age limit of eligibility for mobility allowance.

Mr. Major: During 1986, a total of 13,940 claims for mobility allowance were disallowed on age grounds. The limit of age 75 for the payment of the allowance will not affect any recipients before November 1989 and we shall consider whether or not the legislation should be amended nearer that time.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest information on the revenue deficit in relation to spending of each district health authority at the end of the current fiscal year 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: Regional health authorities are responsible for monitoring district health authorities' spending. Detail of each district's spending is not therefore collected centrally during the financial year.

AIDS

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to his Department about the probability of a mother with the AIDS virus giving it to her unborn child.

Mr. Newton: The presence of antibodies in a baby's blood is not an accurate guide to infection and so it is not possible to determine with certainty whether a new-born baby born to an infected mother is itself infected. Also, in those babies who are born infected, it is not known how many acquired the infection at birth rather than before birth. Current expert advice is that about one in two babies born to an infected mother themselves carry the infection.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many children have caught the AIDS virus from their mothers prior to birth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There have been seven reports to the communicable disease surveillance centre of AIDS cases in babies of infected mothers in the United Kingdom. To the end of February 1987, there had been 10 reports of HIV infection in the babies of infected mothers in England and Wales and by the end of December 1986 there had been 42 similar reports in Scotland.

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is in a position to make a further statement on the implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Major: I am pleased to announce that, following discussion with the local authority associations, I have today made a commencement order to bring into force on 1 April 1987 sections 4 (except paragraph *(b)*), 8(1), 9 and 10 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. I hope that it will be possible to bring section 11 into force later this year.

I have discussed with the local authority associations how best to proceed towards implementation of the rest of the Act, in particular sections 5 and 6 which deal with disabled school leavers, given the resource implications. We agreed that there would be urgent discussions at official level to look in more detail at the costs, and that I should meet the local authority associations in May to review progress.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much nurses' pay has increased in real terms *(a)* between the implementation of the Halsbury award in 1974 and May 1979, *(b)* since May 1979 and *(c)* since the establishment of the pay review body in 1984;

(2) what the gross pay of staff nurses and ward sisters was in *(a)* 1974 after the implementation of the Halsbury award, *(b)* May 1979, *(c)* in 1984 prior to the establishment of the pay review body, and *(d)* following the 1986 pay award;

(3) how much the pay of *(a)* consultants, *(b)* house officers and *(c)* general practitioners, has increased in real terms (i) between February 1974 and May 1979 and (ii) since May 1979.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 27 January, *Official Report*, column *226*, he will list those authorities which made no arrangements for the provision to disabled people of *(a)* telephones, *(b)* aids to daily living or *(c)* adaptations in the last year for which information is available; if he is satisfied that not one disabled person in those authorities needed the particular service; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 February 1987, c. *130-31*]: It is for the relevant local authority to satisfy itself as to what is necessary to meet the needs of a particular disabled person under section 2(1) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Those local authorities which made no provision for each of the items specified for the year ending 31 March 1986 are listed in the table.

The table refers only to provision by social services departments. In some areas, some or all housing adaptations for disabled people are provided by housing authorities.

Local authority social service departments which reported no provision of certain items for the year ended 31 March 1986

A. Telephones (attachments or rentals)

Barnsley	Shropshire
Calderdale	Derbyshire
Kirklees	Leicestershire
Wakefield	Berkshire
Bury	Islington
Manchester	Kingston-upon-Thames
Oldham	Richmond-upon-Thames
Trafford	Surrey
St. Helens	West Sussex

B. Aids to Daily Living

Cleveland	Merton
Northamptonshire	Redbridge
Islington	Surrey

C. Adaptations

Kirklees	Merton
Islington	Surrey
Kensington	

Source: DHSS Statistical Return SSDA 305 from Local Authority Social Service Departments.

Vehicle Emissions (Health)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research he is funding, or is intending to fund, on the possible links between vehicle emissions and respiratory disease.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 24 March 1987]: None. Investigations of effects of certain pollutants that are common to vehicle emissions and other sources have however been funded by the Department in recent years and findings indicate that street levels are not sufficient to cause concern.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Budget

9. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on unemployment.

28. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on unemployment.

60. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any assessment of the likely increase in employment as a result of his Budget.

63. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on unemployment.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the expected impact of his Budget on unemployment.

Mr. Nicholls asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect he expects the Budget proposals to have on employment opportunities.

Mr. Coleman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on unemployment.

Mr. MacGregor: Unemployment has fallen by 145,000 over the last six months, the biggest half-yearly fall since 1973. And as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said in his Budget statement, there is every prospect of a further fall through 1987.

23. **Mr. William Powell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Budget.

27. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received in response to his Budget proposals.

35. **Mr. Wood** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the income tax proposals in his Budget.

39. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Budget.

47. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on his recent Budget statement.

50. **Mr. Latham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the representations which he has received in response to the proposals in his Budget statement.

53. **Mrs. Rowe** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Budget.

55. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Budget.

57. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on income tax proposals in his Budget.

58. **Mr. Franks** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the income tax proposals in his Budget.

61. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the income tax proposals in his Budget.

62. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the level of taxation announced in his Budget.

64. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the level of taxation announced in his Budget.

Mr. Colvin asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Budget.

Mr. Dykes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the public reaction to his Budget proposals announced on 17 March.

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding taxation changes announced in the 1987 Budget.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about his recent Budget statement.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on his Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash).

Budget (Scotland)

10. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on the economy of Scotland.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend's Budget will benefit Scotland just as it will benefit the country as a whole.

Credit

11. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the present rate of expansion of credit in the economy.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Borrowing has remained broadly constant as a share of GDP for several years.

Gross Domestic Product

21. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has about growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom compared with the rest of the European Economic Community during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

25. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has about growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom compared with the rest of the European Economic Community during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

34. **Mr. Hind** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has about growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom compared with the rest of the European Economic Community during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

38. **Mr. Charles Wardle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has about growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom compared with the rest of the European Economic Community during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Mr. Evennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has about growth of gross domestic product in the United Kingdom compared with the rest of the European Economic Community during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, respectively.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts).

EC Grants (Additionality)

22. **Mr. Galley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in his policy towards the European Community's interpretation of the additionality principle with regard to European Economic Community grants.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government's policy remains, as it has always been, that receipts from the European Community enable United Kingdom public expenditure to be maintained at levels higher than could otherwise have been afforded.

Public Sector Pay

24. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on pay variations in the public sector.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Different levels of pay exist in the public sector because the relative pay levels of groups involved are settled on their individual merits. Relativities change as pay changes to take account of such factors as affordability and the need to recruit, retain and motivate people of the right calibre.

Budget (Manufacturing Industry)

26. **Mr. Crowther** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on manufacturing industry.

65. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Chancellor of the Excehquer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on manufacturing industry.

37. **Mr. Millan** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of his Budget on manufacturing industry.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

29. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to be in a position to announce the public sector borrowing requirement for the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. MacGregor: The first provisional estimate of the outturn for the public sector borrowing requirement in 1986-87 will be released on 16 April, although as usual it may be subject to subsequent revision.

32. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the current rate of inflation on the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. MacGregor: Firm fiscal and monetary policies within the framework of the medium term financial strategy have brought about substantial reductions in both inflation and public sector borrowing. However, inflation is just one of a whole range of factors which affect public finances.

Interest Rates

30. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

45. **Mr. Forman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

49. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of interest rates.

51. **Mr. Neil Thorne** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

52. **Mrs. Peacock** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

59. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Robert Key).

Shipowners

31. **Sir John Farr** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking a change in the fiscal regime for shipowners operating in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A number of such representations has been received.

Living Standards

33. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has on the change in living standards of a married man on average earnings and of pensioners since 1979.

36. **Mr. Maples** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has on the change in living standards of a married man on average earnings and of pensioners since 1979.

46. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest information he has on the change in living standards of a married man on average earnings and of pensioners since 1979.

54. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the change in living standards of a married man on average earnings and of pensioners since 1979.

56. **Mr. Porter** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the change in living standards of a married man on average earnings and of pensioners since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson).

Procurement Procedures

40. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department takes to ensure that Government procurement procedures are competitive.

Mr. Brooke: All Departments are required to let contracts as a result of competition unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary.

Earnings

41. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy towards differentials between high and low earners in the light of the low pay unit report published on 9 March, a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. MacGregor: Differentials are necessary to motivate skilled workers and to encourage people to train for skilled and professional jobs, requiring qualifications. But since this Government took office there has been a general rise in living standards for those below average earnings as well as for those above average earnings. Between 1978-79 and 1987-88 the real take home pay of a married man on average earnings is expected to rise 22½ per cent. and a married man on ½ average earnings 18 per cent.

Charities

42. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the taxation position of charities.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Charities already benefit from a variety of tax reliefs, which have been substantially increased since 1979, and I have no plans for a general review. Last year, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor said he would be considering whether further legislation was needed to restrict abuse of the tax reliefs for charities. The Government are not proposing any further measures in this area in this year's Finance Bill, but will be keeping the working of the 1986 provisions under review.

Budget (Oil Industry)

43. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will assess the likely impact of his Budget proposals upon the prospects for the oil and oil-related construction sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The proposals announced in the Budget are designed to encourage further development in the North sea generating business opportunities for the oil and oil-related construction sector.

Inflation

44. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current level of inflation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The increase in retail prices for the twelve months ending February 1987 was 3·9 per cent., an increase of 0·4 per cent. over January. The slight rise was mainly the result of higher prices for petrol, fresh vegetables, cars and car maintenance.

Overdrafts

48. **Mr. Janner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the chairmen of the clearing banks and the Bank of England concerning amendments to be proposed to the Consumer Credit Act in relation to overdrafts.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None. The operation of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Director-General of Fair Trading.

Budget (Wales)

66. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will undertake to monitor the impact of his Budget on the economy of Wales.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend's Budget will be good for Wales just as it will be good for the country as a whole.

Hospital Radio Organisation

67. **Mr. Ames** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received regarding the zero-rating for value added tax of equipment purchased by the hospital radio organisation.

Mr. Brooke: Since April last year my colleagues and I have received about 90 letters about the VAT treatment of hospital radio.

Personal Equity Plan

68. **Mr. Hubbard-Miles** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of applications for personal equity plans so far received have come from taxpayers paying tax at basic rate only.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Full information is not available because subscribers to a personal equity plan will obtain tax relief automatically without having to give details of their tax status to the Inland Revenue. What information is available suggests that substantial numbers of investors are not currently liable to higher rate tax.

Courier Companies

69. **Mr. Grylls** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to amend the requirements of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in relation to private sector international courier companies.

Mr. Brooke: Separate customs facilities for clearing courier traffic are provided at Heathrow. There are no plans to amend customs entry requirements to provide exceptional treatment for couriers.

Redundancy Fund and North Sea Oil

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will give up-to-date figures and add a forecast for 1987-88 in the form of the answer dated 25 July 1986 concerning expenditure from the redundancy fund and revenue from North sea oil.

Mr. MacGregor: A forecast of total benefits paid to the unemployed, of redundancy payments from the redundancy fund and of Government revenue from North sea oil in 1987-88 is given below. Revised estimates for 1981-82 to 1986-87 are also given. Estimates for 1973-74 to 1980-81, given in the answer of 25 July 1986, remain unchanged.

	(a) Total benefits paid to unemployed people[1] (£ million cash)	*(b) Total Redundancy payments from the Redundancy Fund (£ million cash)*	*(c) (a) plus (b) as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (percentage)*	*(d) Revenue from North Sea Tax[2] (£ million cash)*
1981-82	4,020	422	1·7	6,491
1982-83	5,010	382	1·9	7,814
1983-84	5,720	379	2·0	8,782
1984-85	6,330	289	2·0	12,002
1985-86	6,960	296	2·0	11,400
1986-87	7,420	205	2·0	4,800
1987-88	7,350	71	1·8	3,900

[1] Includes rate rebates.
[2] Royalties, petroleum revenue tax (including advance payments), and corporation tax from North sea oil and gas production (before advance corporation tax set off).

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Brooke: Surveys of the ethnic origin of staff in post and new entrants to the Civil Service have been carried out in agreement with the Council of Civil Service Unions on the basis of voluntary self-classification. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system. However, the Civil Service and the Council of Civil Service Unions are keen to improve the data base and are discussing practical ways in which this can be done.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 9 March 1987 reporting the number of new recruits to Her Majesty's Treasury (non-industrials only) in the period 1 October 1985 to end September 1986. During that period 34·25 per cent. failed to respond to the questionnaire. I would also refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on 24 March 1987.

Child Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide estimates for child benefit costs on the same basis for 1987-88 as in the figures given in his answer of 25 July, *Official Report*, column 667.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Personal Incomes (Statistics)

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in real personal disposable

income each year since 1960; and what comparable information he has regarding France, Germany, United States of America, and Japan.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table indicating, on the basis of the most recent information available, what the average pre-tax capita personal income is in each of the standard regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: The latest estimates were published in table 4 (page 92) of the appendix to the article "Regional Accounts 1985" in the November 1986 issue of Economic Trends (No. 397).

Beer

Mr. Lawrence asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to the Exchequer of not increasing the duty payable on beer in line with the cost of living index.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to table 4.1 of the 1987-88 Financial Statement and Budget Report (item 63).

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 27 March 1987

ENERGY

Standing Charges

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for Energy what further consideration he has given to the effect of abolishing the gas and electricity industries' standing charge system in order to assist pensioners and those on low incomes.

Mr. Peter Walker: Abolishing standing charges would significantly disadvantage a great many pensioners and also many on low incomes.

Standing charges cover the cost of necessary emergency services, as well as those of meter reading, accounting and billing. These costs arise no matter how much or how little fuel is used. They reflect the fixed costs which the industries incur in maintaining a constant and safe supply to each consumer's home.

Independent reviews carried out by consultants in 1982 found that the level of standing charges did reflect these costs. At the same time, estimates suggested that abolition of standing charges would disadvantage many in vulnerable groups, for the following reasons.

The abolition of standing charges for all electricity and gas consumers in Great Britain would mean a loss of revenue for the industries in excess of £1,100 million, or over £250 million in the case of pensioners alone. The industries would have to recover that lost revenue through an alternative tariff structure, which would give rise to substantial increases in the unit rates for fuel. Depending on the tariff structure chosen, these increases might be of the order of 15 per cent.

The higher unit rates would penalise those among the least well off who need a lot of fuel. These include many of the old, sick, disabled and those with large families. The precise effect on them would depend upon their patterns of consumption and expenditure and the tariffs in force at the time. But it was estimated that the incorporation of the standing charge into a unit rate would result in higher fuel bills for the following approximate numbers of these groups: over 2 million pensioner households; over 500,000 households relying primarily on state pensions for income; over 500,000 households on incomes a little above the level at which they would receive supplementary benefit. In many cases the bills of these consumers would be higher by a significant amount.

The corresponding benefit to other members of these groups would have been much smaller. Moreover, of the total number of consumers benefiting, most would be those who did not need it, such as proprietors of lock-ups and owners of second homes.

Since 1983, electricity and gas prices overall have fallen by 12 per cent. and 8 per cent. and standing charges by 8 per cent. and 24 per cent., respectively, in real terms. Gas standing charges were also reduced in cash terms, by £1 a quarter, in 1986.

Standing charges remain the fairest way of recovering the costs attributable to each consumer, and I do not propose to take powers to abolish them. They are favoured by the consumers' councils of both, industries, as well as having been endorsed in the 1976 publication by the then Government "Energy Tariffs and the Poor", and by the European Council.

Successive Governments have concluded that energy tariff adjustments do not provide a suitable means of giving social assistance. The social security system provides a more effective means of targeting assistance on those in genuine need. As far as fuel costs are concerned, the main form of help is through the supplementary benefit scale rates, and also through the heating additions which in 1984-85 totalled some £400 million. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services intends that the amount spent on heating additions will be included in the resources to be made available for the new income support scheme which will be introduced in April 1988. This scheme will provide assistance with all day-to-day living expenses, including fuel costs. Extra help will be made available through premiums to those in the greatest need — pensioners, the sick, the disabled, and families.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements exist within his Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisations, for dealing with his responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Mr. Dunn: The staff are deployed for the most part according to the nature of the function, not according to the local education authority involved. It is therefore not possible to identify the number of full-time equivalent staff involved in work concerning the exercise of my right hon. Friend's responsibilities as they affect the Greater London area.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science with which Departments, and non-departmental bodies his Department and its related non-departmental public bodies has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Dunn: The Department consults constantly with a wide range of bodies on a wide range of issues.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has no plans to change the present arrangements.

School Closures

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of schools referred

to him for permission to proceed with closure or merger he has refused in each of the last 10 years; and how long from receipt to decision has been taken to issue the decision on average minimum time and maximum time taken in each of the years in question.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in precisely the form reqested. The table shows the percentage of schools whose proposed closure was rejected by my right hon. Friend or his predecessors in the period from August 1980, when the Education Act 1980 came into force, and December 1986. Information about the time taken to decide closure proposals is not readily available, but my right hon. Friend has undertaken to decide proposals within six months of their publication, unless they present particular difficulties.

Year	*Proposed school closures percentage rejected*
[1]1980	None
1981	4·8
1982	9·5
1983	11·7
1984	7·2
1985	6·3
1986	13·0

[1] From August 1980.

Lancashire (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his meeting on 24 March regarding capital allocations with Lancashire county council representatives.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend received an all-party delegation from the Lancashire county council on 24 March to discuss the Lancashire education authority's capital allocation for 1987-88. The delegation expressed concern that the allocation of £5·994 million represented only 32 per cent. of the authority's planned expenditure, and was only half the size of its allocation for 1986-87. The delegation explained that the size of the allocation meant that the authority would be unable to make progress in replacing and improving old and sub-standard school accommodation; and asked for an increase in the allocation.

My right hon. Friend said that he could not increase the authority's allocation for 1987-88, since the available resources had been distributed. He explained that the Government treated all authorities on exactly the same basis in considering their capital expenditure plans, and that the reason Lancashire had not received a larger allocation was that the authority's plans for capital expenditure on schools failed to take account of the Government's stated priorities: these were, first, to meet the cost (up to a limit previously notified to the authority) of capital projects which had already started, and, second, to allow for projects designed either to provide for basic need in areas of population growth or to remove surplus school accommodation. He pointed out that two thirds of the Lancashire authority's planned spending was for improvement or replacement projects, to which the Government gave a lower priority in allocating the available resources.

My right hon. Friend said that the Department was ready to discuss with the Lancashire authority its plans for expenditure in subsequent years, and suggested that officials from the Department hold an early meeting with officers from the authority.

Higher Education

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish his White Paper on the future of polytechnics and colleges of higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 17 February at column *584*.

Inspectors (Reports)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 19 March, *Official Report*, column *564*, concerning statistical and financial information provided by local education authorities, if he will place copies in the Library of the standard forms used to collect this information in each recent year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am arranging for copies of the forms sent to local authorities in 1984, 1985 and 1986 to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil on 9 March, *Official Report*, columns *22-23*, concerning inspections of secondary schools by Her Majesty's inspectors, if he will publish a table showing, for each type of routine or specific inspection *(a)* the number of such inspections in the last year, *(b)* the number of reports of such inspections in the last year for which the report has not yet been published and *(c)* the target or expected number of such inspections in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1986, Her Majesty's inspectors carried out 65 reporting inspections of secondary schools in England. Twelve of the reports have been published and 53 are in preparation. The Her Majesty's Inspectorate work programme for 1987 has not yet been finalised, but the number of such inspections is not expected to be significantly different. In addition to inspections leading to published reports, Her Majesty's Inspectorate carries out a large number of shorter informal visits to secondary schools, for a variety of purposes.

Expenditure

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state the amount of money spent, per child in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools in Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire, respectively.

Mr. Dunn: The latest information is provided in the following table.

Net institutional expenditure per pupil—1985-86

	Primary schools £	*Secondary schools* £
Derbyshire	780	1,125
Staffordshire	815	1,125
Nottinghamshire	840	1,220

Soviet Studies

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to stimulate Soviet studies in universities and polytechnics.

Mr. Walden: Those engaged in the field of Soviet and East European studies are undertaking a task of importance to this country. At a time when changes of great significance appear to be taking place in the Soviet Union, and when greater contacts are taking place between our two countries, it is especially important that the United Kingdom should have the expertise to follow and analyse what is happening.

Following the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report on Soviet and East European studies, published in May 1986, The Government undertook to consult representative figures from the academic world, the University Grants Committee, the Economic and Social Research Council, and interested Government Departments. In fulfilment of that undertaking I chaired a seminar on 30 January this year which brought together specialists from a number of universities and polytechnics, at which fears were expressed about the future of work in this field. Because of the national importance of Soviet and East European studies, I am considering with my colleagues in other Departments whether steps might be taken to improve the position.

ENVIRONMENT

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 10 March, *Official Report*, column *109*, if he will publish the letter issued by his Department on 6 March stating that he intends to direct the London residuary body to dispose of Thamesmead to Thamesmead town, the disposal to take place on 1 April.

Mr. Chope: I have today placed a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when Thamesmead Town Ltd. will take responsibility for the debt attached to Thamesmead;

(2) how many officials from his Department are on the board of Thamesmead Town Ltd.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail in the *Official Report* the valuation that has been placed on the land and buildings at Thamesmead by the district valuer.

Mr. Chope [*pursuant to his answer*, 19 March 1987]: The valuation prepared by the district valuer, based on an estimate of 300 sales a year of vacant and tenanted property, was £25 million at 31 March 1986.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he plans to publish the auditors' report for 1985-86 and 1986-87 for the London Docklands Development Corporation;

(2) what plans the London Dockland Development Corporation has for Pura Foods of Leamouth.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Loft Insulation (Lichfield)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the correspondence his Department has had with the Lichfield district council in respect of the payments of grants for the provision of loft insulation under the Homes Insulation Act 1978 through the housing investment programme.

Mr. John Patten: Lichfield district council has applied for, and the Department has granted, an additional allocation of resources under the homes insulation scheme.

Pollution (Beaches)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress towards removal of pollution from United Kingdom beaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I and my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for local government and the environment in Scotland announced on 3 February that 389 waters were now included within the scope of the "bathing water" directive (76/160/EEC); 23 of these are in Scotland.

There is now an obligation to monitor all these waters and, where necessary, to bring them up to the directive's standards. Nationally we are spending some £70 million annually in the United Kingdom on remedial works to improve coastal bathing water quality.

More than half the waters surveyed in 1986 already meet the directive's standards. Our aim is for all the waters to meet the directive's standards, although inevitably this will take a number of years.

Ansell's Brewery, Birmingham

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of Tuesday 17 March, *Official Report*, column 436, he will take into account the value of scrap copper and other non-building materials before paying derelict land grant in respect of the former Ansell's brewery in Birmingham.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the vast majority of valuable equipment, incuding copper and other non-building materials, was removed by Ansells brewery prior to the site being acquired by Birmingham city council for demolition purposes. The demolition contractors will be responsible for disposing of normal scrap building materials excepting certain antiquities with an historical value which will go to the city council.

Consultancy Services

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to require greater

openness in the provision of design and other consultancy services in local government; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Our planned legislation on competitive tendering for local authority services will include a power to add activities, via secondary legislation, to those which will appear on the face of the Bill. This will enable us to consider, in the light of experience with the initial list, whether others—such as those referred to by my hon. Friend—should also be opened up to competition. But there is no need to wait for legislation: authorities should be reaping the benefits of competition now, by voluntary action.

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are expected to exist during 1987-88 for analysing and co-ordinating those responsibilities of Departments of State which relate to local government in the Greater London area; and how far they will vary from those of 1986-87.

Dr. Boyson: My Department, and other Departments, make arrangements as appropriate on any matters of mutual concern which may arise.

Cost Floor Regulations

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to amend the cost floor regulations made under the Housing Act 1980 according to which any property built after 1974 cannot be sold at less than the cost of building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Housing and Planning Act 1986

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when section 6 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 will be brought into effect.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Urban Programme

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of urban programme moneys spent in *(a)* Greater Manchester, and *(b)* the city of Manchester (i) at current prices, and (ii) in constant 1987-88 prices for the years 1982-83 to 1987-88, inclusive.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Flats (Crown Sales)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the procedures adopted when the Crown sells blocks of flats.

Mr. John Patten: I can confirm that the various Crown authorities are prepared, where they intend to sell any residential property comprising flats, to give the tenants of such flats an opportunity of first refusal analogous to the relevant provisions in part I of the Landlord and Tenant (No. 2) Bill.

WALES

EEC (Grants and Loans)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the amount received in Wales in the form of the various loans and grants by the EEC for each of the years of our membership.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information requested is as follows:

Source of aid	*Calendar Years (£ million net)*[1]														
	1973	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*Total*
European Regional Development Fund-quota	—	—	6·2	8·4	6·5	17·1	21·7	32·5	24·8	47·3	45·1	63·0	54·9	59·5	387·0
European Regional Development Fund non quota	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10·8	—	7·3	—	1·0	19·1
European Coal and Steel Community	0·05	0·02	51·9	29·7	2·9	102·2	23·6	37·1	68·6	28·5	44·6	16·0	—	—	[4]405·2
European Investment Bank	14·9	8·2	35·3	38·6	12·4	33·5	196·6	14·4	0·7	13·1	23·1	13·2	47·1	[2]25·3	[4]494·2
European Social Fund	2·7	3·5	5·0	4·5	7·9	4·6	6·8	9·9	1·8	2·9	24·5	1·5	3·3	5·2	84·1
European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund	—	0·5	0·6	0·7	2·0	6·8	4·1	18·3	30·5	41·5	57·4	60·4	53·2	67·3	343·3
Total	17·65	12·22	99·0	81·9	31·7	164·2	252·8	112·2	126·4	144·1	194·7	161·4	158·5	158·3	[4]1,732·9

[1] Figures are net of decommitments which have been effected in the event of approved projects not proceeding as originally envisaged.
[2] Figures for 1985 and 1986 are not available.
[3] Figures available only to end of June 1986.
[4] Total also includes £17·9 million which is attributable to multi-regional projects spread out over a number of years since 1973.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bahrain

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the number and identity of British citizens employed in the security service of Bahrain; what guidance he has given to the embassy at Bahrain regarding advice to be given to British citizens in such employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware that the Government of Bahrain employ a number of British citizens in their security service. These are United Kingdom expatriates who have been directly recruited. We have no responsibility deriving from their employment.

We do not exercise authority over the employees of an independant Government nor offer them advice in the carrying out of their duties.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the official response there has been from the United States of America to the United Kingdom compromise proposal on challenge inspection for the verification of a chemical weapons treaty.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool Garston (Mr. Loyden) on 24 March at column *101*.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the official response there has been from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the United Kingdom's compromise proposal on challenge inspection for the verification of a chemical weapons treaty.

Mr. Eggar: The Soviet Union has said that it is willing to negotiate on the basis of the United Kingdom proposal. Negotiations on all aspects of a ban on chemical weapons are continuing at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Lebanon

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide such information as is available to Her Majesty's Government or the United Nations, concerning Israeli incursions into Lebanese air space.

Mr. Eggar: The Israeli air force carried out 18 air strikes in Lebanon in 1986 and a further eight this year. It overflies Lebanese territory regularly. We do not maintain detailed records of such flights.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Tom King: A survey of the ethnic origin of staff-in-post and new entrants to the Northern Ireland Office (Home Civil Service group) has been carried out on the basis of voluntary self-classification. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system.

Information on the number of new entrants who responded to the questionnaires, and those who did not, between October 1985 and September 1986 was given in my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member on 10 March 1987, at columns 142-43.

Information on the response rates among entrants who joined the Northern Ireland Office on loan from other Government Departments is not readily available.

Food Aid

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amounts of free European Economic Community surplus foods were made available for distribution to the needy in Northern Ireland; what estimated percentage of this food still remains available for distribution; when this scheme ends; if he will make a statement on the operation of the scheme in Northern Ireland; and if he will thank all the voluntary workers who responded to the challenge of this scheme.

Mr. Viggers: The amount of food available was not specified on either a national or a regional basis. The European Commission made provision for the release of intervention products and the purchase of other foods on the open market.

The scheme ends on 31 March 1987.

In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, distribution has been carried out under the auspices of certain recognised charitable organisations which have met the demands on them admirably. the organisations were not restricted in their uptake of food under the scheme. Intervention board statistics show that up to week ending 13 March 1987, 1,253 tonnes of butter, 403 tonnes of beef, 19,162 pints of milk and 395 tonnes of cheese have been distributed in Northern Ireland.

The scheme had to be introduced as speedily as possible and I fully appreciate and thank the recognised organisations and other charitable groups for the great work which they have done for the needy in Northern Ireland by responding so enthusiastically and promptly to this very considerable task.

Earnings

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of average earnings of *(a)* women and *(b)* men in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The latest information available, as at April 1986, is as follows:

	Average gross weekly earnings[1] *£*	*Average gross hourly earnings*[1] *p*
Women	128·1	311·4
Men	182·2	430·6

[1] Earnings relate to full-time employees on adult rates and include overtime.

PRIME MINISTER

SERPS

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her oral answer to the hon. Member for Burnley on 24 March, how many years' maximum contributions were possible in SERPS in 1979; and what is the figure now.

The Prime Minister: The state earnings-related pensions scheme began in April 1978; a person retiring on 6 April 1979 could therefore achieve one year's contribution. For someone on average earnings, the extra benefit amounted to 95p a week. This figure has, of course, been uprated in each year since. A person retiring on 6 April 1986, with a maximum of eight years in the scheme, would have received £16·25 in additional pension if he had been on average earnings. It is estimated that for April 1987, with a maximum of nine years contributions, a newly-retiring pensioner who had been on average earnings would receive £20·05 a week.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Health Statistics)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest available figure for the number of AIDS sufferers, HIV carriers and hepatitis B carries among the prison population.

Mr. Mellor: The latest information available is for 24 February, at which date there was no reported case of diagnosed AIDS in the prison population of England and Wales. On the same date the population included 45 inmates reported as having been identified as HIV antibody positive. Corresponding information about current hepatitis B cases is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The latest analysis of the incidence of known cases is for the year ended 31 March 1986 during which 165 acute cases and 295 chronic cases (carriers) were recorded.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the measures taken by his Department to prevent the spread of HIV and hepatitis B in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Guidance on the management of hepatitis B cases was issued by the prison department in August 1984 and revised in February 1985. In the latter month the first in a series of memoranda of guidance on the management of AIDS and HIV cases was also issued. The preventive measures taken locally include medical inquiry and examination of all prisoners at the reception stage, clinical investigation in appropriate cases, counselling and health education and the application of precautionary regime restrictions to prisoners known to be infected. The restrictions applied in a particular case are determined by the medical officer in the light of clinical and other factors and the guidance received from the Department.

Crime (Clear-up Rate)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to increase the clear-up rate of crime in England and Wales.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall continue our efforts to ensure that the police are adequately resourced for this purpose. Local policing priorities and methods of operation are properly matters for chief officers to decide in the light of local circumstances; but, in their work to detect and prevent crime, they will be looking for support from the whole community.

Hollesley Bay Detention Centre

Mr. Birmingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what complaints of ill treatment he has received from inmates and other sources at Hollesley Bay detention centre during the last three months.

Mr. Mellor: Complaints concerning two inmates have been made recently by the probation service in a letter to the governor of Hollesley Bay youth custody centre and detention centre, who is investigating them.

Crime (Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the increase in the number of crimes in Cumbria since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1979 recorded crime in Cumbria has increased by 55 per cent. compared with 51 per cent. in England and Wales as a whole.

Passports

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home department why section 8*(a)* is still included on the passport application form; and what use is made of the information obtained therefrom.

Mr. Waddington: A woman, but not a man, may have acquired, or been exempted from loss of, British nationality directly as a result of an existing or former marriage. Section 8*(a)* of the passport application form seeks to elicit the information required to establish such a route to citizenship.

Rewards

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rewards of £5,000 or more were facilitated by the Metropolitan police in each year since 1975; and what was the highest single amount in each year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that no reward payment of £5,000 or more has been made by the Metropolitan police from public funds in any year since 1975. On occasion, in order to maintain the confidentiality of informants, the Metropolitan police also facilitate the payment of rewards offered by private institutions such as Insurance companies, banks, and so on. It is not the practice of the Metropolitan police to release details of any reward payment.

Police Officers (Resignation)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what regulations govern the resignation of a senior police officer of *(a)* the City of London police or *(b)* the Metropolitan police in order to accept a position in industry or commerce.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An officer below the rank of assistant chief constable (commander in the Metropolitan

and City of London forces) must give one month's written notice of intention to resign. Assistant chief constables and above who have reached the age of 55 can resign after giving three months' written notice but need the police authority's consent if they wish to resign at an earlier age. Police officers are free to accept business appointments on leaving the police service.

Southwark (Racial Incidents)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of reported cases of racial incidents within the London borough of Southwark for each month of each of the last seven years; and how many of these cases each year led to arrests being made.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to replies I gave to questions from the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Banks) on 4 December 1986 at columns *711-14* and the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 10 March 1987 at columns *121-22*. Information for the years prior to 1983 is not available, and monthly breakdowns for the years 1983-85 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Beckingham and Rollestone Army Camps

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the cost of converting Beckingham army camp in Lincolnshire into a temporary prison in 1981;

(2) what was the cost of converting Rollestone army camp in Wiltshire into a temporary prison in 1981.

Mr. Mellor: The capital costs of converting Beckingham and Rollestone camps to temporary prisons in 1981 were as follows:

	£
Beckingham	235,145
Rollestone	162,288

Other costs, for example, manpower and supplies, are not now readily identifiable.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the prison department relinquished Rollestone and Beckingham army camps; and to what use each camp was subsequently put.

Mr. Mellor: The temporary prisons at Rollestone and Beckingham were vacated and returned to the Ministry of Defence for normal use at the end of November 1981.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans his Department has to take over *(a)* Rollestone, *(b)* Beckingham and *(c)* any other army camps for use as temporary prisons during the forthcoming financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The temporary use of military camps for the accommodation of prisoners is among the options that would be considered should the need arise.

Offenders

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column 1036, he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the numbers and proportion of offenders, broken down by age groups;

(2) if, pursuant to the Prime Minister's answer of 19 March, *Official Report*, column 1036, he will publish in the *Official Report* the statistical evidence that the peak age of offenders is 15 years.

Mr. Mellor: This information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales." (Table 5.21 of chapter 5 of Cm. 10 gives the figures for 1985, figure 5.6 of the same chapter shows that the peak age of offending has varied little since 1965.)

Crime Prevention

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further response he has had to his proposals on crime prevention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to receive encouraging responses to our efforts to improve crime prevention. The number of neighbourhood watch schemes continues to increase, demonstrating the enthusiasm of the public for this approach; local authorities are increasingly undertaking crime prevention work, often with Government funding; over 8,000 places have been approved under the community programme to enable voluntary, private and public sector organisations to employ unemployed people on crime prevention projects; and we are working with the Confederation of British Industry, the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and other private sector organisations to develop private sector involvement.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion and actual sum of money has been allocated under the urban programme and through the urban housing renewal unit for crime prevention measures.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

The urban programme makes an important contribution to crime prevention and tackling the effects of crime through support to 380 projects in 1986-87, totalling about £10 million. Initiatives supported include schemes run in various urban areas by NACRO, and crime prevention and community projects run by the police in Birmingham and Newcastle.

About 30 per cent. (some £17 million) of the resources made available through estate action in 1986-87 are being used to support measures to provide increased security for residents on run-down council estates. These include controlled entry arrangements; video surveillance systems; adaptations and remodelling; provision of defensible space; improved lighting; new locks for doors and windows. All these physical measures are being supported by strengthened management presence on estates — which may involve concierge-type arrangements, door porters, resident caretakers, block patrollers and so on.

Police Act 1964

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many settlements of civil actions against the Metropolitan police have been approved by the Secretary of State for the Home Department in each of the last seven years under section 48(2)(*b*) of the Police Act 1964.

Mr. Douglas Hogg [*pursuant to his reply* of 2 March 1987, c. *470-71*]: The Metropolitan police has standing authority for the settlement of civil actions against the force which do not exceed £2,000, excluding legal costs. Home Office approval is required for settlements above that amount. In 1985 Home Office approval was given to 16 cases and in 1986 to 13 cases. The number of cases approved in earlier years is not readily available.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Stocks

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to conduct studies into the logistic and manpower consequences of reducing the United Kingdom's nuclear stocks.

Mr. Stanley: Such studies have been and will be carried out as necessary.

Cruise Missiles

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will now state the timetable for the deployment of cruise missiles at Molesworth.

Mr. Stanley: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) on 15 April 1986 at column *375*.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date cruise missiles or cruise convoy components were stationed at RAF Molesworth and RAF Alconbury.

Mr. Stanley: There are no plans to station either cruise missiles or their associated vehicles at RAF Alconbury. Vehicles and equipment will continue to arrive at RAF Molesworth as it builds up to full operational readiness in 1988.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether RAF Alconbury will be used as a base from which to carry out cruise dispersal exercises.

Mr. Stanley: There are no plans to use RAF Alconbury for this purpose.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to acquire new land for cruise missile dispersal exercises.

Mr. Stanley: There are no plans to acquire land specifically for this purpose, but because of the demand for training areas we have a general requirement to try to expand existing training areas where suitable land becomes available.

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Defence which Ministry of Defence police establishment in East Anglia will be responsible for policing cruise dispersals in East Anglia; and whether he has any plans to increase that establishment.

Mr. Stanley It is not our practice to provide details of specific security arrangements and plans.

Marconi

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet representatives of the Marconi group of companies; and what issues he intends to discuss.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the normal course of affairs, I, my ministerial colleagues and our officials would expect to meet representatives of the Marconi group of companies at regular and frequent intervals, given the amount of business between us.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list all the projects which the Marconi group of companies is working on as part of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 23 March at column *6* listing contracts placed by the Ministry of Defence. The available details of contracts or subcontracts placed by the United States Government or United States contractors have been provided on a confidential basis to the Defence Committee.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given in response to this question by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 24 March at column *98*.

Eastney Barracks

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total size of Eastney barracks; what proportion of the site is open space; and how many *(a)* listed and *(b)* unlisted buildings it contains.

Mr. Freeman: Eastney barracks occupies a site of some 37 acres of which 14 acres is open space. Eastney playing fields occupy a further 21 acres of open space. The barracks area contains six listed and 51 unlisted buildings. In addition, some of the earth embankments and boundary walls are scheduled as ancient monuments.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if there is to be a continued Marine presence at Eastney barracks, Portsmouth;

(2) if he will make a statement about future provision for the groups and organisations using the Eastney barracks, Portsmouth;

(3) if he will make a statement about the future of the Royal Marine Volunteer Cadet Corps at Eastney barracks, Portsmouth.

Mr. Freeman: It remains our intention to dispose of at least the major part of the Royal Marine barracks at Eastney. Suitable provision will be made either at Eastney or elsewhere for the units currently using the buildings there.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what groups and organisations currently use Eastney barracks in Portsmouth.

Mr. Freeman: The following groups and organisations currently use Eastney barracks:

(a) Headquarters Training Reserve and Special Forces Royal Marines;

(b) A small secretariat responsible for administration of non-public funds within the Royal Marines;

(c) The editor of the Royal Marines magazine, "Globe and Laurel", and his staff;
(d) The Royal Marines museum;
(e) The Royal Marines' historical archivist;
(f) A small Royal Marines Reserve detachment;
(g) A detachment of the Royal Marine Volunteer Cadet Corps;
(h) An official of the Property Services Agency also has an office in the barracks.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to dispose of the Eastney barracks site, Portsmouth.

Mr. Freeman: It is the intention to proceed as quickly as possible with the disposal of the Eastney barracks site once the extent of any residual Royal Marines presence there has been determined. The future of the Eastney playing fields will depend upon the outcome of a separate study.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many houses and flats are in the Eastney barracks, Portsmouth; and when they are to be sold.

Mr. Freeman: There are four houses and 10 flats within the Royal Marine barracks, Eastney. Any decision on disposals would have to be taken in the light of the prevailing requirement for married quarters in the Portsmouth port area as a whole.

Squadron Leader Hare

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column 945, if he will make a statement as to why Squadron Leader Hare was permitted to make a statement to the press subsequent to action being taken arising from his first statement, and as to why no further disciplinary action was considered necessary subsequent to the second breach.

Mr. Freeman: Squadron Leader Hare was interviewed immediately following the publication of further articles in the press about him. No disciplinary action was considered necessary.

Equestrian Events

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that military vehicles or equipment should never be used for the transport of private horses owned by service personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: If the purpose of a journey is related to authorised activity, military vehicles may be used to transport private horses owned by service personnel if this is the most cost-effective option. If it is not related to authorised activity, military vehicles may still be used subject to availability and to the full cost being recovered. I see no reason to alter this policy.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that volunteers only should be in attendance on duty at organised equestrian events involving service personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Encouraging participation in sporting events is an important part of maintaining the well-being and physical efficiency of service personnel. There is generally no shortage of volunteers to organise and take part in such events; and all personnel selected for equestrian trades are volunteers. However, certain organisational duties in support of sporting events do not necessarily lend themselves to the use of volunteers.

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that time spent participating in equestrian activity by officers, and currently treated as duty hours, should in future be counted against leave entitlement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. Such a policy would not be consistent with the Army's policy on participation in sports and physical activity. It would also be contrary to the purpose for which leave is granted.

TRANSPORT

Cars (Business Purchases)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the number of cars bought by business in the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available, together with a breakdown by engine size;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated number of passenger cars owned by businesses of all kinds, the number and cost of new cars purchased by such businesses in the latest year for which information is available, the corresponding figures for cars used by the owners, directors and higher-paid employees of such businesses, together with such information as he has available generally or for particular groups of the size, cost or quality of car purchased.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At the end of 1986, 2·04 million cars in Great Britain were registered in a company name. The number of these cars used by owners, directors and high-paid employees is not known. The Inland Revenue has estimated that some 1·15 million directors and higher-paid employees in the United Kingdom are expected to have a company car for private use in 1987-88.

Information about the number of new vehicle registrations in Great Britain in the 12 months to January 1987 is given in the table. Information about the cost of these vehicles is not available.

Cars registered in a company name by engine size (c.c.)

Thousands

Over		*1,000*	*1,200*	*1,300*	*1,500*	*1,600*	*1,800*	*2,000*	*2,500*	*3,000*	*All*
Not over	*1,000*	*1,200*	*1,300*	*1,500*	*1,600*	*1,800*	*2,000*	*2,500*	*3,000*		*vehicles*
	65·8	55·9	130·9	51·0	240·9	121·2	113·3	48·1	29·3	15·1	871·4

Severn Estuary Ports

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that vessels over 10,000 dwt can continue to use the ports of the Severn estuary for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Michael Spicer: If it is eventually decided to construct a Severn barrage, then the capacity of the locks built into it would determine the size of vessels that could use the ports above the barrage line. On this point, I have nothing to add to the answer I gave my hon. Friend on 1 December 1986 at column *502*. I am aware of no other foreseeable new restriction on access to ports in the estuary.

Helicopters (Testing and Maintenance)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek further powers to require adequate testing and maintenance of helicopters.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. The CAA has statutory responsibility for the airworthiness of helicopters on the United Kingdom register and has adequate powers in this respect.

Pelican Crossings (Accidents)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of accidents occurring on pelican crossings on major trunk roads for each of the last three years; and if he will distinguish how many of these accidents were fatal.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

Accidents at Pelican crossings on trunk roads: Great Britain

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1983	19	161	554	734
1984	15	151	541	707
1985	19	163	440	622

Japan Airlines

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has any plans to transfer all Japan Airlines flights from Heathrow to Hurn airport;

(2) if he has any plans to move all Japan Airlines flights from Heathrow airport to Gatwick.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

EC Transport Council Meeting

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the European Community Transport Council meeting on 23-24 March.

Mr. Moore: Further progress was made towards agreement on a "first step" on air transport liberalisation towards the 1992 internal market deadline. Other member states finally accepted our argument that cheap off-peak fares should be available to all categories of traveller and that unnecessarily restrictive fare conditions should be dropped. The only remaining mandatory conditions for such fares would be an advance purchase requirement and a cancellation-change of booking penalty. The Council accepted these ideas unanimously. The deadlock on fares has therefore been broken, but more work is needed on capacity and market access if — as the Commission rightly insists — there is to be an acceptable overall settlement by the end of June. The Belgians have helpfully timetabled an additional Aviation Council for 9 June and the Commission is giving us robust support.

The Council also discussed a number of inland transport issues. On road haulage liberalisation it was unfortunately not possible to reach agreement on a proposal for further increases in the Community quota of road haulage permits for 1987. A further attempt to agree quota increases will be made in June. There was a preliminary exchange of views on road haulage taxation issues. The Council also discussed the financial aspects of the proposed medium-term transport infrastructure programme but made little progress in resolving outstanding differences between member states. The presidency reported on discussions with Austria and Switzerland on the problems of transit traffic through these countries and there was a brief discussion of speed limits. The Council held a minute's silence in memory of the victims of the Zeebrugge ferry tragedy and I was able to thank my fellow Transport Ministers for the assistance given during the rescue operation.

CIVIL SERVICE

Trade Unions (Meetings)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met representatives of the Civil Service trade unions; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lace: I have informal meetings from time to time with representatives of the Civil Service trade unions. Matters of mutual interest are discussed.

Civil Service (Functions)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will establish a programme to acquaint Back-Bench hon. Members with the basic functioning of the Civil Service.

Mr. Lace: I have over the past year invited Back-Bench Members from all parties to a series of presentations in the Management and Personnel Office on management reform in the Civil Service, and I am willing to arrange further presentations if there is a demand for them. In January I published a report on the work of my Department entitled "The Challenge of Change in the Civil Service", and I am willing to publish further reports if that would be helpful.

ARTS

Museum Charges

Mr. Litherland asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will establish a unit within the Office of Arts and Libraries to monitor the effect of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

Mr. Dubs asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will set up an inquiry into the effect of museum entrance charges on the level of admission.

Mr. Lace: I have no such plans.

Public Libraries

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Minister for the Arts if he will give the total number of books held in public libraries in England and Wales for 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: No statistics are available for 1960. Approximate figures for England and Wales for subsequent years, as published by CIPFA, are as follows:

	million
1965	71·7
1970	97·7
1975	77·8
1980	118·0
1985	[1]121·2

[1] Figures adjusted to include data from some authorities which did not render returns to CIPFA.

Mr. Cohorn asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had about possible initiatives to increase the number of people using the public library service.

Mr. Luce: None.

Mr. Spencer asked the Minister for the Arts what estimate he has of the growth in service points in public libraries in the 10 year period to 1984-85.

Mr. Luce: Statistics published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy show an increase in the total number of service points in England from 9,720 in 1975 to 15,238 in 1985.

Libraries (Damage)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister for the Arts (1) if the British Library has completed its assessment of the damage to its collections inflicted by Miss Norma Hague and discovered in 1984;

(2) if he will list the individual and total value of the damage inflicted by Miss Norma Hague on the collections of *(a)* the British Library, *(b)* the Birmingham public library and *(c)* the Liverpool public library, including in each case the token value mentioned as their share of the damage on the charge when Miss Hague pleaded guilty and was convicted in November 1984.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table for each region in Great Britain and Greater London, showing the totel numbers of people who, when interviewed for each of the last three labour force surveys, said that they would like a job if one were available, and the numbers of those in that category who *(a)* had not looked for work in the four weeks reference period and were not available to start work within two weeks and *(b)* had looked for work in the four-week reference period but were not available to start work within two weeks.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figures supplied in the first three columns of the tables refer to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) figures for the number of people who said they would like a job for whatever reason. The remaining columns extract the figures requested for those people who were not available for work. Any analysis should take account of the fact that the figures in the first three columns include a further substantial number of people who said they were available for work but had not looked for work in the last four weeks.

As I made clear in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 17 March at column *445*, the results of the LFS taken as a whole show that, according to internationally accepted definitions laid down by the ILO, fewer than 3 million people were unemployed in spring 1986, as in spring 1985.

Great Britain

thousands

	All people who said they would like a job			*of which not available to start work within two weeks*					
				(a) Those who had not looked for work in the previous four weeks			*(b) Those who had looked for work in the previous four weeks*		
	spring 1984	*spring 1985*	*spring 1986*	*spring 1984*	*spring 1985*	*spring 1986*	*spring 1984*	*spring 1985*	*spring 1986*
South East	1,408	1,356	1,390	233	251	218	59	76	78
(of which Greater London)	(641)	(607)	(645)	(97)	(116)	(98)	(22)	(32)	(35)
East Anglia	137	158	160	19	21	30	10	10	9
South West	377	319	346	68	53	54	18	21	15
West Midlands	596	576	538	75	66	63	23	22	18
East Midlands	344	352	350	48	42	51	19	19	16
Yorkshire and Humberside	465	512	515	47	71	69	16	25	14
North West	776	730	746	120	97	108	32	27	33
North	413	376	374	70	58	53	14	12	13
Wales	303	312	322	53	50	57	[1]	12	10
Scotland	585	544	555	75	66	80	19	17	14
Great Britain	5,405	5,233	5,296	807	774	783	216	241	220

Note: The figures are subject to sampling errors. In some cases the figures may appear not to add because of rounding.
[1] Sample size too small to provide a reasonable estimate.

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Paymaster General if he will give the official unemployment figures for May 1970, January 1974, March 1979, June 1983 and the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table gives estimates of seasonally adjusted unemployment (excluding school leavers) consistent with the current monthly count. These statistics are available only from January 1971.

Unemployment (excluding school leavers) in the United Kingdom adjusted for discontinuities and seasonality (thousands)

Date	
January 1971	570·3
January 1974	493·6
March 1979	1,183·8
June 1983	2,886·8
February 1987	[1]3,073·9

[1] February figure is provisional and subject to revision.

Weekly Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the median gross weekly earnings of full-time adult males and females at the latest available date and the upper and lower deciles as a percentage of the median; and if he will provide comparable figures for 1973 and 1979.

Mr. Lee: The most recent information relates to April 1986 and is published in table 30 of part B of the 1986 New Earnings Survey report. This table also includes figures for 1979. Figures for 1973 are published in table 30 of part B of the 1983 survey report. Copies of these reports are available in the Library.

Job Creation

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what are the gross and net costs for each financial year since 1982-83 for the following special employment measures: *(a)* community programme, *(b)* enterprise allowance scheme, *(c)* young workers scheme, *(d)* community industry, *(e)* job release scheme and *(f)* job splitting scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The gross and estimated net costs are as follows:

Gross costs (£ million)[1]

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*[2]1986-87*
CP	155·00	394·0	524·0	667·0	1,038·0
EAS	2·40	25·0	79·6	104·0	147·0
YWS	41·00	58·0	41·0	32·0	[3]17·9
CI	23·00	24·0	24·0	24·0	26·0
JRS	211·80	258·0	280·0	187·0	112·0
JSS	0·04	0·3	0·2	0·2	1·0

[1] Gross costs excluding administration costs.
[2] Estimated.
[3] Scheme has now closed; replaced during 1986-87 by the new workers scheme.

Estimated net Exchequer costs per person no longer unemployed (£)

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*[1]1986-87*
CP	[2]	[2]	1,950	1,950	2,000
EAS	[2]	[2]	[2]	1,800	1,800
YWS	[2]	[2]	2,400	1,400	1,400
CI	[2]	[2]	1,450	1,500	1,550
JRS	[2]	[2]	1,650	1,850	1,850
JSS	[2]	[2]	−200	−150	−150

[1] Estimated.
[2] Figures are not available.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what are the latest estimated percentage register effects on the unemployment count of the following special employment measures: *(a)* community programme, *(b)* enterprise allowance scheme, *(c)* young workers scheme, *(d)* community industry, *(e)* job release scheme and *(f)* job splitting scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It is difficult, if not impossible, to calculate precisely the effect of the unemployment count on employment measures. The people engaged in *(b)* *(c)* *(e)* and *(f)* in the question are all engaged in ordinary work in the mainstream of the economy and have left the unemployment count in the same way as other unemployed people who find a job. The community programme *(a)* also provides real work at normal pay levels for long-term unemployed people. We make attempts to estimate how many of those concerned would have found jobs in any event without the schemes. Taking account of this and other factors, the best estimates we have of the so-called percentage effect of the schemes is as follows:

Employment measure	*Estimated effect on unemployment count (per cent. of those on schemes)*
CP	93
EAS	37
YWS	28
CI	97
JRS	88
JSS	95

Moss Side Task Force

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will make a statement on the progress made by his Department in the Moss Side task force area;

(2) if he will give details of actions taken by the Moss Side task force since it was established;

(3) if he will give details of the budget allocated to the Moss Side task force during 1986-87; how much will be spent by 31 March and on what projects; and what will happen to any unspent funds after 31 March;

(4) if he will give details of the budget to be allocated to the Moss Side task force during 1987-88;

(5) if he will give details of the Moss Side task force's relationship with the local community, including the extent to which its views are taken into account and influence decisions on how the task force's budget is allocated.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Wool Textile Industry

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General how many men and women are currently being trained in the wool textile industry and how many have been trained in each of the last 20 years.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 March 1987, c. *353*]: The historic information requested is not available. Current training statistics in the wool textile industry are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Aid

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the total value of regional development grants and regional selective assistance grants awarded to businesses in the west Lancashire district in *(a)* 1984-85 and *(b)* 1985-86 respectively;

(2) how many regional development grants and regional selective assistance grants were awarded in the west Lancashire district council area in *(a)* 1984-85 and *(b)* 1985-86, respectively.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In 1984-85, seven regional development grant (2) and regional selective assistance awards totalling £266,000 were made in the west Lancashire district area. In 1985-86, 52 awards totalling £2,173,000 were made.

These figures do not include any awards made under regional development grant (1) scheme. Records of such awards were not maintained for individual areas.

Citizens Band Radio

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when holders of the citizens band radio licence will be able to use the frequencies of the common European CEPT system; and how long they will be able to use the existing 27MHz frequency after the launch of the CEPT system.

Mr. Pattie: I am pleased to be able to annouce that all holders of a current CB licence who possess appropriate equipment meeting my Department's new performance specification MPT 1333 will be able to use these frequencies from 1 September 1987.

I am also glad to reaffirm that the existing 27MHz frequencies will be in use for a long period. The existing CB United Kingdom specification (MPT 1320) will be reviewed during 1990 but, whether the outcome of the review, we will ensure that existing users get a good life out of their sets. One of the major factors we shall take into account in assessing the continuing need for the existing channels in 1990 will be the size of the licensed CB service. Irrespective of the outcome of this review, we will not be permitting conversions between two services. Converted sets will not meet the new specification and can give rise to interference. Sets must fully meet the new specification as this gives the best chance of European harmonisation of CB.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission (Undertakings)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) how many complaints have been received by his Department about alleged breaches of undertakings given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in respect of takeovers and purchases in each of the years 1970 to 1986;

(2) what remedies exist when undertakings given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in relation to takeovers and purchases are not kept.

Mr. Howard: Any assurances which may be given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission have no statutory underpinning. Under section 88(1) of the Fair Trading Act 1973, my right hon. Friend has powers, in the event of an adverse public interest finding on a non-newspaper merger reference, to ask the Director General of Fair Trading to seek undertakings from the parties to remedy the adverse effects identified. Such undertakings are given to Ministers.

The operation of undertakings given under the Fair Trading Act is kept under review by the Director General of Fair Trading, who has a duty, if it appears to him that an undertaking has not been or is not being fulfilled, to advise Ministers. Any complaints about breaches of undertakings would normally be drawn to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading. The Department does not keep records on this basis. The Fair Trading Act also provides for the exercise of the order-making powers under certain circumstances to remedy adverse effects on the public interest identified by the MMC.

Airbus Industrie (Jobs)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing the location and the number of jobs at each location involved in Airbus Industrie A300, and A310, A320 production in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Pattie: On the information presently available, it is estimated that the number and location of jobs in the United Kingdom currently attributable to the Airbus Industrie A300, A310 and A320 programmes is set out in the following table. The figures are approximations only.

Area	Airframe manufacture (British Aerospace and sub-contractors)	Engine manufacture (Rolls-Royce, sub-contractors and suppliers)	Material and equipment supply
North/Northeast	600	—	100
Northwest	2,600	—	450
Midlands	—	[1]1,200	1,000
Home Counties	400	—	400
South West and South Wales	850	—	550
South of England	150	—	300
Total	4,600	1,200	2,800

[1] Jobs relating to Rolls-Royce's participation in International Aeroengine's V2500 engines for the A320.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in the real rate of exchange against the principal currencies since the date on which the nominal rate for sterling fell to its lowest point against the deutschmark, together with his estimate of the increase in United Kingdom, German, American and Japanese export prices in dollar terms since the fourth quarter of 1976, having regard to changes in the nominal exchange rate and rates of inflation since the quarter for which the figures were last published in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics."

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Finished Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table for finished manufactures on the same basis as that provided for manufactures in his answer to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 19 February, *Official Report*, column 750; and if he will provide similar figures of value and volume for trade with the European Economic Community.

Mr. Alan Clark: Those figures which are available follow. Estimates of volume of trade in finished manufactures by geographical area are not available.

The volume of United Kingdom exports and imports of finished manufactures

1972 = 100 *OTS basis, seasonally adjusted*

	Export volume	Import volume
1972	100·0	100·0
1979	129·0	203·5
1980	132·5	204·1
1981	127·3	210·6
1982	129·4	234·9
1983	123·7	266·5
1984	139·1	298·6
1985	150·6	315·9
1986	151·8	329·0

The value of United Kingdom trade with the European Community in finished manufactures

£ thousand *OTS basis, seasonally adjusted*

	Exports	Imports
1972	n.a.	n.a.
1979	7,341,815	9,604,449
1980	8,422,634	9,237,230
1981	7,882,883	9,828,207
1982	8,635,642	12,035,897
1983	9,348,155	14,852,054
1984	11,078,535	16,916,328
1985	12,803,151	19,328,706
1986	14,084,555	21,958,747

Cellular Mobile Telephone Network

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if it remains Government policy to take a leading part in the development of a Pan-European cellular mobile telephone network; and if his Department will reserve all the frequencies earmarked for this purpose.

Mr. Pattie: The Government's commitment to the early introduction of a Pan-European digital cellular mobile telephone network remains firm. Once agreement on the standard has been reached we shall be looking for agreement for service to start in 1991. The European Commission has tabled a draft directive calling for the frequency bands 905-914 MHz and 950-959 MHz or equivalent parts of the bands 890-915 MHz and 935-960 MHz to be made available exclusively for the needs of a public Pan-European digital cellular mobile communication service by 1 January 1991. The United Kingdom supports this in principle and is willing to take the steps necessary to comply with this.

Hereford Bye Street Gate Sculptures

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will set out in the *Official Report* the evidence which has been submitted to the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art to sustain the claim that the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures have been exported and reimported to the United Kingdom in the last 50 years;

(2) if he will make it his policy to identify the intending purchasers of objects which are the subject of consideration by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art;

(3) whether the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures are still located in the United Kingdom;

(4) when he was first advised of the sale of the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures; what has been the reason for the length of time which has elapsed since *(a)* for the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art to make a recommendation and *(b)* for him to reach a decision; and when he now expects to make his decision;

(5) if any export licence has been granted in respect of the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Fireworks

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will introduce legislation to prohibit

unlicensed traders from selling fireworks and to ensure that unlicensed retailers are not supplied with fireworks by wholesalers;

(2) if he has any plans to improve the level of enforcement of the Fireworks Safety Regulations 1986: *(a)* relating to the release of information about holders of explosives licences from the fire authority and *(b)* in detecting unlicensed traders during the period when fireworks are sold to the public.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *242*]: Under the Explosives Act 1875 a licence is required to store fireworks. This has the effect of requiring all retailers who sell fireworks to be licensed. Local authorities are required under the same Act to keep lists of retailers holding licences, which are available for inspection. They should also monitor retail outlets during the fireworks season.

I do not consider it necessary at present to introduce further legislation as unlicensed traders can already be prosecuted under the Explosives Act 1875.

The Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1986 were introduced to deter shopkeepers from selling fireworks to the under-16s. They do not refer to the question of explosive licences.

SCOTLAND

Highlands and Islands (Employment)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of employment levels within the Highlands and Islands.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of employees in employment in the Highlands and Islands in September 1981 were:

	Number
Highland Region	72,600
Orkney	6,100
Shetland	10,900
Western Isles	8,200

These figures are from the 1981 census of employment; corresponding results from the 1984 census should be available later this year.

Prisoners (Health Statistics)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest available figure for the number of *(a)* AIDS sufferers, *(b)* HIV carriers and *(c)* hepatitis B carriers among the prison population in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: There are no AIDS sufferers among the prison population in Scotland at present.

No reliable figures for the numbers of carriers of HIV or hepatitis B are available. Blood tests can be taken only with the informed consent of inmates and it is not possible to estimate the numbers of symptomless carriers who may have been received into penal establishments. Figures for reported incidence of infection in penal establishments are collected on an annual basis and published in the annual reports "Prisons in Scotland". In 1985 there were 26 cases of infective jaundice (hepatitis B) reported compared with 55 cases in 1984. Reported figures for 1986 will be published in due course.

Fisheries Protection

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he has decided to replace the current arrangement of chartering an aircraft for fisheries patrols with a contract for operating another aircraft that his Department has acquired for this purpose.

Mr. John MacKay: Before implementing the Government decision to replace RAF Nimrods on fisheries surveillance by civilian aircraft an appraisal was undertaken to decide on the appropriate aircraft. Pending the outcome of those deliberations an interim solution, making substantial savings on the cost of Nimrod, was implemented using a Dornier 228. The longer term appraisal was completed in the autumn 1986 and it indicated that a Fokker F27-200 should be acquired for the task.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what price is being paid by his Department for the acquisition of a Fokker F27-200 aircraft for fisheries patrols; and from what source it is being purchased.

Mr. John MacKay: The Fokker F27-200 is being acquired from Nordic Oil Services Ltd, Edinburgh airport, at a cost of just under £3 million.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost to his department of the new arrangements for airborne fisheries patrols under the following headings: *(a)* depreciation and interest charges on the aircraft and radar equipment, respectively, *(b)* the costs of operating, and fuelling the aircraft and *(c)* costs of repairs and maintenance to the aircraft and the radar equipment, respectively.

Mr. John MacKay: The aircraft, including radar, will be depreciated in equal instalments of around £230,000 per annum over 10 years to an estimated residual value of £700,000. No interest charges apply in this transaction. It would not be appropriate to provide the estimated costs of operating and fuelling the aircraft nor the estimated costs of repairs and maintenance of aircraft and radar whilst the tenders regarding the operation are being evaluated and whilst discussions regarding a maintenance contract are at a critical stage.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a description of the Fokker F27-200 aircraft that he is acquiring for fisheries patrols including its age, any protective treatment to prevent corrosion when flying at low levels over the sea, its range and any other factors relevant to the use for this purpose.

Mr. John MacKay: The Fokker F27-200 was in scheduled airline service with Air UK until early 1987. It was built in October 1959 and has a remaining life of over 21,500 cycles (a cycle is from a take-off to a landing). It is anticipated that some 400 cycles per annum will be undertaken by the aircraft on fisheries surveillance. The aircraft is at present undergoing a major maintenance check during which time it will be extensively protected against corrosion. The endurance of the aircraft will be enhanced by the addition of pylon tanks and extra wing tanks, resulting in a total endurance of some 10½ hours. The aircraft will be fitted with Litton LTN 72R inertial navigation system and Litton LTN 211 VLF/Omega.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what radar equipment he proposes to install in

the aircraft that he is acquiring for fisheries patrols; and how this equipment compares with the radar system used under the previous charter contract in terms of purchase and operating costs, suitability for detection of fishing vessels and suitability for detection of submarines.

Mr. John MacKay: The aircraft will be equipped with the Edinburgh-built Ferranti Seaspray mark III surveillance radar and will thus have the advantage of local maintenance back-up. The radar installed on the charter aircraft currently in use, is the US-built Bendix 1500. The technical assessment made by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland indicated that the more sophisticated Ferranti radar will have a better detection rate of fishing vessels in all sea states. The suitability or otherwise of the equipment to detect submarines was not a feature of the radar evaluation.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of alleged illegal fishing have been reported by his Department's airborne fisheries patrols since 1 September 1986; how many of those reports have been investigated; and how many prosecutions have been made as a result of those investigations.

Mr. John MacKay: Airborne fisheries patrols have reported six cases of alleged infringements, all of which have been investigated. One case is being considered for submission to the procurator fiscal and details of another case (involving a Dutch vessel) have been supplied to the Dutch authorities for them to consider legal action. In the remaining cases no further action is proposed.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the draft certificates of authorisation for the discharge of radioactive waste from Torness power station.

Mr. Ancram: I have arranged for copies of the draft certificates of authorisation and of the accompanying explanatory notes to be sent today to the hon. Member. Copies will also be placed in the Library.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when, and by what method, the decision by Fife health board to adopt option C as its policy in relation to acute bed provision in Fife was conveyed to his office.

Mr. John MacKay: The board's decision was initially conveyed to the Scottish Home and Health Department by telephone on 3 March when a meeting was arranged to consider the procedures to be adopted to implement the decision. The board has yet to make a formal submission for approval in principle.

Roads

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the major trunk road projects which have been started during 1986-87 and those which he expects to start in 1987-88.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Schemes with estimated cost over £1 million started since 1 April 1986

	Scheme
A75	Annan Bypass
A75	Ringford Bypass
A82	Arden to Auchentullich (Loch Lomond)
A82	Polnaberoch to Arnburn (Loch Lomond)
A830	Kinsadel to Mallaig, Stage I
A9	Mound Bridges
A92	Murcar to Balmedie[1]
A929	Kingsway to Powrie
A96	Auldearn Bypass
A96	Bucksburn to Tyrebagger, Stage I
A96	Forres Bypass[2]

[1] Contract awarded March 1987: possible works start in April 1987.
[2] Advance Works contract March 1987: main contract in April 1987.

Schemes with estimated cost over £1 million expected to start by 31 March 1988

	Scheme
A7	Middleton Bypass
A75	Castle Douglas Bypass
A75	Glenluce Bypass
A77	Balsalloch to Balcreuchan
M8	Starlaw Junction, Livingston
A80	Stepps Bypass (Advance Works)
A82	Auchendenpan to Arden (Loch Lomond)
A82	Luss to Camus Nan Clais (Loch Lomond)
A830	Polnish to Lochailort
A9	Dornoch Firth Approach Roads (South)
A9	Dornoch Firth Approach Roads (North)
A9	Dunbeath Bridge
A92	East Fife Regional Road, Stage III
A92	East Fife Regional Road, Stage IV
A92	Elion Bypass
A92	Tipperty
A94	Candy to Stonehaven

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Diseases (Research)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 12 March, *Official Report*, column *301*, with regard to former and current research programmes, if he will state *(a)* which wildlife vectors have been found to pass the diseases to farm animals, *(b)* which farm animals were involved, *(c)* what was the vehicle of infection in each case, *(d)* how many dairy farms were studied, what were the numbers of cattle in each farm, and what was the general level of hygiene of the farms and *(e)* in how many cases the diseases were passed to humans; and what was the vehicle of infection in each case.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There is very little evidence to indicate that wildlife vectors transmit diseases such as salmonellosis to farm animals but it has been established that badgers have infected cattle with tuberculosis. The results of the research programmes are available from published sources. I am arranging for a list of the relevant publications to be placed in the Library of the House.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now extend the designations of environmentally sensitive area to the whole of the South Downs in West Sussex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In his statement of 9 February announcing additional funding for further ESAs my right hon. Friend said that we would build on the existing short list from the Countryside Commission and Nature Conservancy Council. The western part of the south downs is on that short list and we shall therefore give careful consideration to the case for designating the area.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans for further reductions in Agricultural Development Advisory Service beekeeping specialists; and if he will make a statement on the future funding of his Ministry's free diagnostic disease service.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are no plans to reduce the number of Agricultural Development and Advisory Service beekeeping specialists. Charging will be introduced on 30 March for certain diagnostic services to beekeepers, details of which have been sent to the Beekeeping associations, but diagnosis of notifiable diseases of bees, namely American Foul Brood, European Foul Brood and Varroasis, will continue to be carried out free of charge.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Maternity Payments

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Putney claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending 31 December 1986, 1120 claims for maternity grant were made at the Wandsworth local office of the Department which covers Putney, although the boundaries are not conterminous.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Welwyn and Hatfield claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending 31 December 1986, the following numbers of claims to maternity grant were made at the Department's local offices which cover the constituency, although their boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Hatfield	1,008
Hertford	1,339
St. Albans	1,509

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in Battersea claimed the maternity grant in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. But in the 12 months ending 31 December 1986, the following numbers of claims to maternity grant were made at the Department's offices which cover the Battersea constituency, although the boundaries are not conterminous:

	Number
Balham	[1]
Battersea	[1]
Wandsworth	1,120

[1] Claims for these offices are dealt with at Broadstairs out-station. A total of 5,258 claims were dealt with at that office but this total includes claims proper to other offices.

Benefits

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social services if he will provide figures for the number of people dependent on social security benefits, broken down by category of benefit and age group, in the constituencies of Southwark and Bermondsey, Peckham and Dulwich.

Mr. Lyell: I regret that it is not possible to provide all the information requested.

The constituencies of Southwark and Bermondsey, Peckham and Dulwich are covered by the Department's local office as follows:

Constituency	*Local offices*
Southwark and Bermondsey	Southwark, Kennington Park, Camberwell and Greenwich Park
Peckham	Peckham, Camberwell and Kennington Park
Dulwich	Peckham, Brixton and Crystal Palace

The boundaries of these offices are not conterminous with those of the constituencies they cover.

The numbers of people receiving locally administered social security benefits from the offices covering these constituencies are:

	Southwark and Bermondsey	*Peckham*	*Dulwich*
Sickness and Invalidity Benefit[1]	3,875	3,295	5,285
Maternity Allowance[1]	553	330	743
Severe Disablement Allowance[1]	478	445	787
Supplementary Benefit[2]	52,429	35,122	35,569

[1] *Source:* 100 per cent. count of cases in action on 10 March 1987.
[2] *Source:* 100 per cent. of cases in action on 10 February 1987.

These constituencies are covered for unemployment benefit purposes by the following unemployment benefit offices:

Constituency	*Unemployment benefit offices* [1]
Southwark and Bermondsey	Borough and Bermondsey
Peckham	Camberwell 'A' and Camberwell 'B'
Dulwich	Forest Hill, Camberwell 'A' and Camberwell 'B'

The boundaries of offices covering the constituencies of Peckham and Dulwich are not conterminous with those of the constituencies.

The number of people receiving unemployment benefit from the offices covering these constituencies, at 13 November 1986, the latest available figures, was:

Constituency	*Unemployment benefit recipients*
Southwark and Bermondsey	1,088
Peckham	1,721
Dulwich	2,492

Source: 100 per cent. count of claims in payment.

Housing benefit is administered in all these constituencies by the London borough of Southwark. In April 1986 — the latest information available — there were an estimated 36,610 recipients of housing benefit in Southwark. This figure is subject to revision.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if, following the decision of the social security commissioner in the case of Joseph Hugh Foster of Birmingham made on 20 February, he will arrange for local offices to review all cases of unemployed persons having supplementary benefit reduced because such persons could receive an early reduced pension from a former employer;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to compensate for loss of pension those unemployed persons taking a reduced early pension in consequence of the supplementary benefit notional resource regulations; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many submissions have been made to his headquarters from local offices in respect of deductions in supplementary benefit to unemployed persons who have a choice of a reduced early pension from a former employer;

(4) what is his estimate of the number of unemployed persons in receipt of supplementary benefit, whose benefit is reduced because they have an entitlement to an early reduced pension from a former employer.

Mr. Lyell: I understand that the Chief Adjudication Officer is considering the decision of the social security commissioner in the case of Mr. Joseph Hugh Foster of Birmingham, and I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply when that has been completed. Information is not available on the number of unemployed persons whose supplementary benefit is reduced because they have an entitlement to an early reduced pension from a former employer. Neither our headquarters nor the Chief Adjudication Office have received any submissions on this subject since my predecessor's replies to the hon. Member on 28 October 1985 at column *381* and 13 January 1986 at column *497*.

West Middlesex Hospital

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the West Middlesex hospital does not refuse emergency admissions from the London ambulance service.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS Staff (Pay)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the present pay scales for National Health Service nursing officers, ward sisters and radiographers.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Social Security Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing on the same basis as table 40.13 of "Social Security Statistics 1985" the average amount paid per person insured under each heading in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

Average (£) amounts of employees' NI contributions paid per person insured in the 1983-84 tax year, United Kingdom

	Total	*Men*	*Married women*	*Single, widowed, divorced women*
Class 1 standard rate	450·70	521·70	307·80	324·40
Contracted in	352·70	430·40	229·20	250·50
Contracted out	561·90	606·00	436·00	447·40
Mixed contracted in/out	483·50	550·30	376·00	370·90
Class 1 reduced rate	142·60	—	142·30	146·30
Mixed class 1 standard rate and reduced rate	156·70	—	145·90	225·90
Class 2	212·70	214·00	197·10	198·00
Mixed class 1 and class 2	381·40	389·60	314·40	319·10
Class 3[1]	192·00	188·60	215·50	193·70

Note: All statistics rounded to nearest 10 pence.

[1] Includes class 3 contributions only. Mixtures of class 3 contributions and other contributions types are analysed according to the other contributions types.

Health Education Council

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons who worked for the Health Education Council have resigned, or given notice of resignation, since Her Majesty's Government made clear their intention to abolish the Health Education Council; what positions they held; and what percentage they represent of staff at each occupational grade.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that the selection of work, preparation of surveys and publication of results by the new Health Education Authority will be totally independent and not subject in any way to ministerial or official interference.

Mr. Newton: The new Health Education Authority will work within the framework of ministerial accountability to Parliament and of a policy to increase the vigour and effectiveness of action throughout the NHS to prevent illness and promote good health. It is not however expected to acquiesce in its employees' commissioning and publishing major documents without properly involving or informing the chairman and members of the authority.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients are on the hospital waiting lists in each of Devon's four district health authorities, in each of the categories of patient for which this information is available.

Mr. Newton: For the latest centrally available information I refer the right hon. Member to "Hospital In-Patient Waiting List, England at 30 September 1986, National Regional and District Summaries," copies of which have been placed in the Library. For more recent figures he may wish to write to the chairmen of the district health authorities in Devon.

Nurses (Pay)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what assessment he has made of the financial position of nurses in the National Health Service, with particular regard to their ability, at current pay levels, to obtain suitable accommodation; what representations he has received on this subject from nurses in Berkshire; what discussions he has had with the nurses and midwives negotiating bodies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will expedite his consideration of the recommendations of the review body on nurses' pay; if he will make it his policy, in reaching his conclusions on those recommendations, to allow health authorities sufficient flexibility to enable them to implement a higher pay increase in areas where recruitment and retention is especially difficult; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the next financial year information concerning wife's earned income allowance on the same basis as given in his reply of 24 July 1986, *Official Report*, column *467*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the receipts in 1987-88 from the taxation of unemployment benefit and all supplementary benefits; and what is his estimate of the gross and net cost of a 10 per cent. increase in benefit in each case.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Pension Funds

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will introduce legislation to remove tax privileges from all pension funds which have experienced a reduction in the employer's contribution; and if he will provide an estimate of the likely saving in tax on the income of such funds at the standard rate.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. The information on which to base such an estimate is not available.

Debt Service Payments

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report* the level of debt service payments to the United Kingdom in cash terms and as a proportion of the total to the world for both *(a)* the 29 poorest countries in Africa and *(b)* all African nations for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is not available.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the number of cases in which tax relief will be given through MIRAS or otherwise on mortgage interest payments in the next financial year, together with *(a)* the estimated cost to the Exchequer and *(b)* the number of recipients of working age and their distribution by personal category gross and by range of gross income together with the average amount of relief given.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *39-40*]: Information is in the table. Following the introduction of MIRAS in April 1983, it is no longer possible to estimate the distribution of mortgage interest relief from tax records (except for relief on mortgages outside the scope of MIRAS and relief given at rates in excess of the basic rate). The estimates in the table are based on projections of the family expenditure survey for 1985 and the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes, but the sample sizes do not permit reliable estimates to be made in all the detail requested. Estimates are subject to revision.

Tax units[1] receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income—1987-88

Range of total income	*[2]Numbers receiving mortgage relief*	*[3]Average value of relief per mortgagor*	*[3]Total cost of relief*
£'000	*'000*	*£*	*£ million*
Under 4	650	370	240
4 to 5	100	380	40
5 to 6	140	410	50
6 to 7	210	420	80
7 to 8	270	450	120
8 to 9	370	470	170
9 to 10	480	480	230
10 to 12	1,150	540	600
12 to 15	1,600	560	890
15 to 20	1,900	580	1,100
20 to 25	730	580	410
25 to 30	330	810	270
Over 30	470	1,170	550
Total	8,400	570	4,750

[1] Single persons and married couples.
[2] Including about 500,000 non-taxpayers.
[3] Assuming interest rates of 12·25 per cent. in April 1987 and 11·25 per cent. from May 1987.

Self-Employed Persons (Taxation)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of tax units where the main source of income is self-employment income in each year since 1983-84.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *215*]: The number of tax units (single people or married couples) where the main source (usually the largest source) of income was self-employment income was about 2·10 million in 1983-84 and 2·26 million in 1984-85, the latest year for which information is available.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the amount of stamp duty payable on share transactions *(a)* since deregulation in the stock markets and *(b)* in a comparable period the previous year; and what is the implied rate at which the share capital of the listed companies is being turned over annually.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *39*]: Receipts of stamp duty and stamp duty reserve tax on share transactions in the period from 27 October to the end of February were:

	£ million
1985-86	220
1986-87	260

The implied rates of turnover of the ordinary share capital of United Kingdom registered companies indicated by these figures are 9 per cent. and 16·2 per cent. respectively.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the estimated loss of *(a)* income tax, *(b)* higher rate tax and *(c)* capital gains tax in the next financial year on, respectively, life assurance premiums, retirement annuity premiums and lump-sum payments to pensioners, distinguishing between non-contributory schemes which provide a maximum pension of 50 per cent. of eligible earnings and other schemes and the investment income of occupational pension schemes, distinguishing between employees and the self-employed.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *40*]: The available estimates of the direct revenue cost in respect of income ax are as follows:

	Estimated direct revenue cost 1987-88 £ million
Life assurance premium relief	510
Retirement annuity premium relief	410
—(Of which, relief at the excess of rates above the basic rate	130)
Relief on lump sum payments to pensioners (assuming relief at the basic rate)	1,100
Relief on investment income of occupational pension funds (assuming relief at the basic rate)	4,000

There are no capital gains tax implications of life assurance premium relief, retirement annuity premium relief or lump sum payments to pensioners, and no estimate of the cost of exempting capital gains made by pension funds is available.

The estimated cost of life assurance premium relief given above includes a cost of about £100 million in respect of the self-employed and that for retirement annuity premium relief includes a cost of about £330 million.

The requested disaggregation by type of scheme is not available.

Personal Income (Rates and Taxation)

Mr. Straw asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the proportion in percentage terms, *(b)* the amount in current prices and *(c)* the amount in constant 1985-86 prices of personal income taken by taxation and rates for the year 1986-87, taking account of any changes announced in his Budget statement and any previously announced changes, and for each of the years 1978-79, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 for each level of average earnings, each category of taxpayer, and each category of taxation and rates, in the manner of the answers of 3 April 1985, *Official Report*, column *676*, 2 July 1985, *Official Report*, column *112* and of 26 March 1986, *Official Report*, column *530*.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to 1987-88 the information on tax and national insurance contributions as a proportion of gross earnings provided in his reply of 19 February to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, column *829*; and if he will provide the same information for a married man with an earning wife.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his replies*, 23 and 25 March 1987, c. *42-216*]: I understand that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) wishes the figures in constant 1986-87 prices with rates for the year 1987-88. The information is in the following tables.

50 per cent. of average male earnings (£113·65 a week in 1987-88).

	Single			*Married no children*			*Married both working*			*Married 2 children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*
1978-79												
Income tax	7·91	15·29	17·0	4·42	8·55	9·5	0·00	0·00	0·0	3·26	6·30	6·3
NIC	3·02	5·84	6·5	3·02	5·84	6·5	3·02	5·84	6·5	3·02	5·84	5·9
Total	10·93	21·13	23·6	7·44	14·38	16·0	3·02	5·84	6·5	6·28	12·14	12·2
1979-80												
Income tax	8·95	14·94	16·4	5·20	8·68	9·5	0·00	0·0	0·0	5·20	8·68	8·3
NIC	3·55	5·93	6·5	3·55	5·93	6·5	3·55	5·93	6·5	3·55	5·93	5·7
Total	12·50	20·87	22·9	8·75	14·61	16·0	3·55	5·93	6·5	8·75	14·61	14·0
1980-81												
Income tax	11·78	16·91	17·9	7·33	10·52	11·2	0·00	0·00	0·0	7·33	10·52	9·9
NIC	4·43	6·36	6·7	4·43	6·36	6·7	4·43	6·36	6·7	4·43	6·36	6·0
Total	16·21	23·26	24·7	11·76	16·88	17·9	4·43	6·36	6·7	11·76	16·88	15·8
1981-82												
Income tax	13·95	17·96	19·1	9·51	12·24	13·0	1·58	2·03	2·2	9·51	12·24	11·5
NIC	5·65	7·27	7·7	5·65	7·27	7·7	5·65	7·27	7·7	5·65	7·27	6·8
Total	19·60	25·23	26·9	15·16	19·52	20·8	7·23	9·31	9·9	15·16	19·52	18·3
1982-83												
Income tax	14·58	17·53	18·5	9·50	11·42	12·1	0·48	0·58	0·6	9·50	11·42	10·6
NIC	6·89	8·28	8·8	6·89	8·28	8·8	6·89	8·28	8·8	6·89	8·28	7·7
Total	21·47	25·81	27·3	16·39	19·71	20·8	7·37	8·86	9·4	16·39	19·71	18·3
1983-84												
Income tax	15·35	17·63	18·0	9·53	10·95	11·1	0·00	0·00	0·0	9·53	10·95	9·8
NIC	7·70	8·84	9·0	7·70	8·84	9·0	7·70	8·84	9·0	7·70	8·84	7·9
Total	23·05	26·48	27·0	17·23	19·79	20·2	7·70	8·84	9·0	17·23	19·79	17·6
1984-85												
Income tax	16·18	17·69	17·5	9·55	10·44	10·3	0·00	0·00	0·0	9·55	10·44	9·0
NIC	8·33	9·11	9·0	8·33	9·11	9·0	8·33	9·11	9·0	8·33	9·11	7·9
Total	24·51	26·80	26·5	17·88	19·55	19·3	8·33	9·11	9·0	17·88	19·55	16·9
1985-86												
Income tax	17·05	17·60	17·2	9·84	10·16	9·9	0·00	0·00	0·0	9·84	10·16	8·7
NIC	8·93	9·22	9·0	8·93	9·22	9·0	7·54	7·78	7·6	8·93	9·22	7·9
Total	25·98	26·82	26·2	18·77	19·38	18·9	7·54	7·78	7·6	18·77	19·38	16·6
1986-87												
Income tax	17·92	17·92	16·8	10·56	10·56	9·9	0·00	0·00	0·0	10·56	10·56	8·7
NIC	9·60	9·60	9·0	9·60	9·60	9·0	6·62	6·62	6·2	9·60	9·60	7·9
Total	27·52	27·52	25·8	20·16	20·16	18·9	6·62	6·62	6·2	20·16	20·16	16·7
1987-88												
Income tax	18·09	17·39	15·9	10·98	10·56	9·7	0·00	0·00	0·0	10·98	10·56	8·6
NIC	10·23	9·84	9·0	10·23	9·84	9·0	7·05	6·78	6·2	10·23	9·84	8·0
Total	28·32	27·23	24·9	21·21	20·39	18·7	7·05	6·78	6·2	21·21	20·39	16·6

75 per cent. of average male earnings (170·48 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	15·56	30·08	22·4	12·07	23·34	17·3	5·28	10·21	7·6	10·80	20·88	14·5
NIC	4·52	8·74	6·5	4·52	8·74	6·5	4·52	8·74	6·8	4·52	8·74	6·0
VAT	1·79	3·46	2·6	1·66	3·20	2·4	2·01	3·89	2·9	1·81	3·50	2·4
Other indirect	6·19	11·96	8·9	7·13	13·78	10·2	8·20	15·85	11·8	6·92	13·38	9·3
Total of above	28·05	54·25	40·3	25·37	49·06	36·5	20·01	38·68	28·7	24·05	46·50	32·2
Domestic rates	2·38	4·61	3·4	2·35	4·54	3·4	2·89	5·58	4·1	2·37	4·58	3·2
Total	30·44	58·85	43·7	27·72	53·60	39·8	22·89	44·26	32·9	26·42	51·09	35·4
1979-80												
Income tax	17·15	28·63	20·9	13·40	22·37	16·3	6·17	10·30	7·5	13·40	22·37	14·9
NIC	5·33	8·90	6·5	5·33	8·90	6·5	5·33	8·90	6·5	5·33	8·90	5·9
VAT	3·33	5·55	4·1	3·03	5·06	3·7	3·62	6·04	4·4	3·37	5·63	3·7
Other indirect	7·04	11·76	8·6	8·02	13·38	9·8	9·16	15·30	11·2	7·87	13·14	8·8
Total of above	32·85	54·83	40·1	29·78	49·70	36·3	24·28	40·53	29·6	29·98	50·04	33·3
Domestic rates	2·84	4·73	3·5	2·79	4·65	3·4	3·42	5·71	4·2	2·81	4·70	3·1
Total	35·69	59·57	43·5	32·56	54·35	39·7	27·70	46·24	33·8	32·79	54·74	36·4
1980-81												
Income tax	21·63	31·04	21·9	17·19	24·67	17·4	9·26	13·29	9·4	17·19	24·67	16·1
NIC	6·65	9·54	6·7	6·65	9·54	6·7	6·65	9·54	6·7	6·65	9·54	6·2
VAT	4·09	5·86	4·1	3·77	5E41	3·8	4·44	6·37	4·5	4·10	5·88	3·8
Other indirect	8·26	11·86	8·4	9·39	13·47	9·5	10·66	15·31	10·8	9·18	13·17	8·6
Total of above	40·63	58·31	41·2	37·00	53·10	37·5	31·02	44·51	31·5	37·12	53·27	34·7
Domestic rates	3·71	5·32	3·8	3·62	5·19	3·7	4·37	6·28	4·4	3·65	5·24	3·4
Total	44·34	63·64	45·0	40·61	58·29	41·2	35·39	50·79	35·9	40·77	58·52	38·1
1981-82												
Income tax	24·89	32·04	22·7	20·45	26·33	18·7	12·52	16·12	11·4	20·45	26·33	17·1
NIC	8·48	10·92	7·7	8·48	10·92	7·7	8·48	10·92	7·7	8·48	10·92	7·1
VAT	4·35	5·83	4·1	4·11	5·30	3·8	4·80	6·18	4·4	4·55	5·85	3·8
Other indirect	9·61	12·37	8·8	10·89	14·01	9·9	12·38	15·94	11·3	10·80	13·90	9·1
Total of above	47·51	61·16	43·4	43·93	56·55	40·1	38·19	49·16	34·9	44·27	57·00	37·1
Domestic rates	4·56	5·86	4·2	4·45	5·73	4·1	5·43	6·99	5·0	4·50	5·79	3·8
Total	52·06	67·02	47·6	48·38	62·28	44·2	43·62	56·15	39·9	48·77	62·78	40·9
1982-83												
Income tax	26·39	31·73	22·4	21·31	25·62	18·1	12·28	14·76	10·4	21·31	25·62	16·5
NIC	10·33	12·42	8·8	10·33	12·42	8·8	10·33	12·42	8·8	10·33	12·42	8·0
VAT	4·68	5·63	4·0	4·25	5·11	3·6	5·01	6·02	4·2	4·74	5·70	3·7
Other indirect	10·01	12·04	8·5	11·39	13·70	9·7	13·04	15·68	11·0	11·27	13·55	8·7
Total of above	51·42	61·81	43·6	47·28	56·85	40·1	40·66	48·88	34·4	47·66	57·29	36·9
Domestic rates	4·98	5·99	4·2	4·89	5·88	4·1	6·01	7·23	5·1	4·94	5·94	3·8
Total	56·40	67·80	47·8	52·18	62·73	44·2	46·67	56·11	39·5	52·59	63·23	40·8

75 per cent. of average male earnings (£170·48 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1983-84												
Income tax	28·18	32·37	22·0	22·35	25·67	17·4	12·05	13·84	9·4	22·35	25·67	15·9
NIC	11·54	13·26	9·0	11·54	13·26	9·0	11·54	13·26	9·0	11·54	13·26	8·2
VAT	5·20	5·97	4·1	4·75	5·45	3·7	5·63	6·47	4·4	5·30	6·09	3·8
Other indirect	10·95	12·58	8·5	12·45	14·30	9·7	14·32	16·45	11·2	12·31	14·14	8·8
Total of above	55·87	64·18	43·6	51·09	58·68	39·8	43·54	50·01	33·9	51·50	59·16	36·7
Domestic rates	5·04	5·79	3·9	4·96	5·70	3·9	6·09	7·00	4·8	5·02	5·77	3·6
Total	60·91	69·97	47·5	56·05	64·39	43·7	49·63	57·01	38·7	56·53	64·93	40·3
1984-85												
Income tax	30·06	32·87	21·7	23·42	25·61	16·9	11·86	12·97	8·5	23·42	25·61	15·4
NIC	12·49	13·66	9·0	12·49	13·66	9·0	12·49	13·66	9·0	12·49	13·66	8·2
VAT	6·22	6·80	4·5	5·88	6·43	4·2	6·82	7·46	4·9	6·23	6·82	4·1
Other indirect	11·61	12·69	8·4	13·22	14·46	9·5	15·25	16·67	11·0	13·12	14·35	8·6
Total of above	60·38	66·02	43·5	55·02	60·16	39·7	46·42	50·76	33·5	55·27	60·43	36·4
Domestic rates	5·34	5·84	3·8	5·25	5·74	3·8	6·43	7·03	4·6	5·33	5·83	3·5
Total	65·72	71·86	47·4	60·27	65·90	43·4	52·85	57·78	38·1	60·60	66·26	39·9
1985-86												
Income tax	31·94	32·97	21·5	24·73	25·53	16·6	12·01	12·40	8·1	24·73	25·53	15·2
NIC	13·40	13·83	9·0	13·40	13·83	9·0	11·91	12·29	8·0	13·40	13·83	8·2
VAT	6·90	7·12	4·6	6·51	6·72	4·4	7·70	7·95	5·2	6·82	7·04	4·2
Other indirect	12·24	12·63	8·2	13·94	14·39	9·4	16·28	16·80	10·9	13·79	14·23	8·5
Total of above	64·47	66·56	43·3	58·58	60·47	39·3	47·90	49·44	32·2	58·74	60·64	36·1
Domestic rates	5·73	5·92	3·9	5·65	5·84	3·8	6·97	7·20	4·7	5·71	5·89	3·5
Total	70·21	72·48	47·2	64·23	66·31	43·1	54·87	56·64	36·9	64·45	66·53	39·6
1986-87												
Income tax	33·39	33·39	20·9	26·03	26·03	16·3	13·01	13·01	8·1	26·03	26·03	14·9
NIC	14·40	14·40	9·0	14·40	14·40	9·0	13·12	13·12	8·2	14·40	14·40	8·3
VAT	7·44	7·44	4·7	6·98	6·98	4·4	8·17	8·17	5·1	7·25	7·25	4·2
Other indirect	13·25	13·25	8·3	14·98	14·98	9·4	17·52	17·52	10·9	14·91	14·91	8·6
Total of above	68·48	68·48	42·8	62·40	62·40	39·0	51·82	51·82	32·4	62·59	62·59	35·9
Domestic rates	6·44	6·44	4·0	6·34	6·34	4·0	7·81	7·81	4·9	6·37	6·37	3·7
Total	74·93	74·93	46·8	68·74	68·74	42·9	59·63	59·63	37·3	68·96	68·96	39·6
1987-88												
Income tax	33·44	32·15	19·6	26·32	25·31	15·4	13·73	13·20	8·1	26·32	25·31	14·2
NIC	15·34	14·75	9·0	15·34	14·75	9·0	13·98	13·44	8·2	15·34	14·75	8·3
VAT	8·16	7·85	4·8	7·60	7·31	4·5	8·76	8·42	5·1	7·82	7·51	4·2
Other indirect	13·90	13·36	8·2	15·58	14·98	9·1	18·12	17·42	10·6	15·46	14·86	8·4
Total of above	70·84	68·11	41·6	64·84	62·34	38·0	54·58	52·48	32·0	64·93	62·43	35·1
Domestic rates	7·04	6·77	4·1	6·89	6·62	4·0	8·46	8·13	5·0	6·90	6·63	3·7
Total	77·88	74·88	45·7	71·73	68·97	42·1	63·04	60·62	37·0	71·83	69·06	38·8

100 per cent. of average male earnings (£227·30 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	23·22	44·89	25·0	19·73	38·14	21·3	12·32	23·82	13·3	18·46	35·69	18·8
NIC	6·03	11·66	6·5	6·03	11·66	6·5	6·03	11·66	6·5	6·03	11·66	6·2
VAT	2·46	4·76	2·7	2·37	4·58	2·6	2·78	5·37	3·0	2·43	4·70	2·5
Other indirect	7·54	14·57	8·1	8·48	16·40	9·1	9·49	18·35	10·2	7·91	15·29	8·1
Total of above	39·25	75·88	42·3	36·61	70·78	39·5	30·62	59·20	33·0	34·82	67·33	35·6
Domestic rates	2·87	5·56	3·1	2·70	5·23	2·9	3·08	5·95	3·3	2·79	5·39	2·8
Total	42·12	81·43	45·4	39·32	76·01	42·4	33·70	65·14	36·3	37·61	72·72	38·4
1979-80												
Income tax	25·35	42·32	23·2	21·60	36·06	19·8	14·16	23·64	13·0	21·60	36·06	18·4
NIC	7·10	11·85	6·5	7·10	11·85	6·5	7·10	11·85	6·5	7·10	11·85	6·1
VAT	4·60	7·67	4·2	4·36	7·28	4·0	5·01	8·36	4·6	4·53	7·56	3·9
Other indirect	8·67	14·48	7·9	9·65	16·11	8·8	10·69	17·84	9·8	9·13	15·24	7·8
Total of above	45·72	76·32	41·8	42·71	71·30	39·1	36·96	61·69	33·8	42·36	70·71	36·1
Domestic rates	3·43	5·73	3·1	3·22	5·37	2·9	3·65	6·09	3·3	3·33	5·55	2·8
Total	49·15	82·05	45·0	45·93	76·67	42·0	40·61	67·78	37·2	45·68	76·26	38·9
1980-81												
Income tax	31·49	45·19	24·0	27·05	38·82	20·6	19·11	27·43	14·5	27·05	38·82	19·3
NIC	8·87	12·73	6·8	8·87	12·73	6·8	8·87	12·73	6·8	8·87	12·73	6·3
VAT	5·65	8·10	4·3	5·41	7·76	4·1	6·13	8·80	4·7	5·52	7·92	3·9
Other indirect	10·21	14·66	7·8	11·33	16·27	8·6	12·44	17·86	9·5	10·70	15·35	7·6
Total of above	56·22	80·68	42·8	52·66	75·58	40·1	46·55	66·81	35·4	52·13	74·82	37·3
Domestic rates	4·51	6·47	3·4	4·20	6·03	3·2	4·67	6·71	3·6	4·34	6·23	3·1
Total	60·73	87·16	46·2	56·86	81·61	43·3	51·23	73·52	39·0	56·47	81·05	40·4
1981-82												
Income tax	35·84	46·14	24·6	31·39	40·41	21·5	23·46	30·20	16·1	31·39	40·41	20·2
NIC	11·31	14·56	7·8	11·31	14·56	7·8	11·31	14·56	7·8	11·31	14·56	7·3
VAT	6·29	8·09	4·3	5·96	7·67	4·1	6·71	8·64	4·6	6·14	7·91	3·9
Other indirect	11·87	15·28	8·1	13·15	16·93	9·0	14·44	18·59	9·9	12·54	16·14	8·1
Total of above	65·31	84·07	44·8	61·81	79·57	42·4	55·92	71·98	38·3	61·39	79·02	39·4
Domestic rates	5·54	7·14	3·8	5·17	6·65	3·5	5·80	7·46	4·0	5·34	6·88	3·4
Total	70·85	91·21	48·6	66·98	86·22	45·9	61·71	79·45	42·3	66·73	85·90	42·8
1982-83												
Income tax	38·19	45·91	24·3	33·11	39·81	21·0	24·09	28·96	15·3	33·11	39·81	19·7
NIC	13·77	16·56	8·7	13·77	16·56	8·7	13·77	16·56	8·7	13·77	16·56	8·2
VAT	6·50	7·82	4·1	6·16	7·41	3·9	6·98	8·39	4·4	6·40	7·69	3·8
Other indirect	12·38	14·88	7·9	13·74	1652	8·7	15·16	18·22	9·6	13·09	15·73	7·8
Total of above	70·84	85·17	45·0	66·78	80·29	42·4	60·00	72·14	38·1	66·36	79·79	39·4
Domestic rates	6·05	7·27	3·8	5·67	6·81	3·6	6·41	7·71	4·1	5·85	7·03	3·5
Total	76·89	92·44	48·8	72·45	87·10	46·0	66·41	79·84	42·2	72·21	86·82	42·9

100 per cent. of average male earnings (£227·30 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			*Married no children*			*Married both working*			*Married 2 children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1986-87 prices*	*Per cent. of gross income*
1983-84												
Income tax	41·00	47·10	24·60	35·18	40·41	20·6	24·88	28·58	14·5	35·18	40·41	19·2
NIC	15·39	17·68	9·0	15·39	17·68	9·0	15·09	17·68	9·0	15·39	17·68	8·4
VAT	7·20	8·27	4·2	6·85	7·87	4·0	7·80	8·96	4·6	7·12	8·18	3·9
Other indirect	13·55	15·57	7·9	15·02	17·25	8·8	16·65	19·13	9·7	14·30	16·43	7·8
Total of above	77·14	88·61	45·1	72·44	83·21	42·4	64·72	74·35	37·9	71·99	82·70	39·3
Domestic rates	6·12	7·03	3·6	5·74	6·60	3·4	6·49	7·46	3·8	5·94	6·83	3·2
Total	83·26	95·64	48·7	78·18	89·80	45·7	71·22	81·80	41·6	77·94	89·52	42·5
1984-85												
Income tax	43·93	48·03	23·7	37·30	40·78	20·2	25·73	28·13	13·9	37·30	40·78	18·8
NIC	16·65	18·21	9·0	16·65	18·21	9·0	16·65	18·21	9·0	16·65	18·21	8·4
VAT	8·29	9·07	6·5	8·14	8·90	4·4	9·27	10·14	5·0	8·79	9·61	4·4
Other indirect	14·32	15·66	7·7	15·93	17·42	8·6	17·68	19·33	9·6	15·18	16·60	7·7
Total of above	83·20	90·97	45·0	78·03	85·31	42·2	69·33	75·81	37·5	77·92	85·20	39·3
Domestic rates	6·48	7·08	3·5	6·08	6·65	3·3	6·85	7·49	3·7	6·30	6·89	3·2
Total	89·67	98·05	48·5	84·10	91·96	45·5	76·18	83·30	41·2	84·23	92·09	42·5
1985-86												
Income tax	46·83	48·34	23·6	39·62	40·90	20·0	26·90	27·77	13·6	39·62	40·90	18·7
NIC	17·87	18·45	9·0	17·87	18·45	9·0	17·07	17·62	8·6	17·87	18·45	8·4
VAT	9·20	9·49	4·6	9·01	9·30	4·5	10·35	10·68	5·2	9·65	9·97	4·5
Other indirect	15·10	15·59	7·6	16·79	17·33	8·5	18·77	19·38	9·5	15·96	16·47	7·5
Total of above	89·00	91·87	44·8	83·29	85·98	42·0	73·09	75·45	36·8	83·10	85·79	39·1
Domestic rates	6·94	7·17	3·5	6·53	6·74	3·3	7·41	7·65	3·7	6·74	6·96	3·2
Total	95·94	99·04	48·3	89·82	92·73	45·3	80·50	83·10	40·6	89·85	92·75	42·3
1986-87												
Income tax	48·86	43·86	22·9	41·50	41·50	19·4	28·48	28·48	13·3	41·50	41·50	18·2
NIC	19·21	19·21	9·0	19·21	19·21	9·0	17·50	17·50	8·2	19·21	19·21	8·4
VAT	9·94	9·94	4·7	9·71	9·71	4·5	11·16	11·16	5·2	10·33	10·33	4·5
Other indirect	16·41	16·41	7·7	18·14	18·14	8·5	20·38	20·38	9·5	17·36	17·36	7·6
Total of above	94·42	94·42	44·2	88·56	88·56	41·5	77·51	77·51	36·3	88·40	88·40	38·8
Domestic rates	7·81	7·81	3·7	7·33	7·33	3·4	8·32	8·32	3·9	7·54	7·54	3·3
Total	102·24	102·24	47·9	95·89	95·89	44·9	85·84	85·84	40·2	95·94	95·94	42·2
1987-88												
Income tax	48·78	46·90	21·5	41·67	40·07	18·3	29·07	27·95	12·8	41·67	40·07	17·2
NIC	20·46	19·67	9·0	20·46	19·67	9·0	18·64	17·92	8·2	20·46	19·67	8·5
VAT	10·94	10·52	4·8	10·62	10·22	4·7	12·08	11·61	5·3	11·24	10·81	4·6
Other indirect	17·31	16·64	7·6	18·97	18·24	8·3	21·20	20·38	9·3	18·13	17·43	7·5
Total of above	97·48	93·73	42·9	91·72	88·20	40·4	80·99	77·87	35·6	91·50	87·98	37·8
Domestic rates	8·56	8·23	3·8	7·99	7·69	3·5	9·03	8·69	4·0	8·20	7·88	3·4
Total	106·04	101·96	46·7	99·72	95·88	43·9	90·02	86·56	39·6	99·70	95·86	41·2

150 per cent. of average male earnings (£340·95 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	38·53	74·49	27·7	35·04	67·74	25·2	27·64	53·44	19·9	33·77	65·29	23·4
NIC	7·80	15·08	5·6	7·80	15·08	5·6	9·05	17·50	6·5	7·80	15·08	5·4
VAT	3·87	7·47	2·8	3·86	7·45	2·8	4·24	8·20	3·0	3·72	7·19	2·6
Other indirect	10·36	20·02	7·4	11·31	21·87	8·1	11·97	23·15	8·6	9·97	19·27	6·9
Total of above	60·55	117·06	43·5	58·01	112·15	41·7	52·90	102·28	38·0	55·25	106·82	38·3
Domestic rates	3·90	7·53	2·8	3·45	6·66	2·5	3·44	6·65	2·5	3·66	7·89	2·5
Total	64·45	124·60	46·3	61·45	118·81	44·1	56·35	108·94	40·5	58·92	113·91	40·8
1979-80												
Income tax	41·74	69·67	25·5	37·99	63·41	23·2	30·55	51·00	18·6	37·99	63·41	22·1
NIC	8·78	14·66	5·4	8·78	14·66	5·4	10·66	17·79	6·5	8·78	14·66	5·1
VAT	7·27	12·14	4·4	7·17	11·98	4·4	7·76	12·96	4·7	6·96	11·61	4·0
Other indirect	12·11	20·21	7·4	13·10	21·86	8·0	13·70	22·87	8·4	11·78	19·66	6·9
Total of above	69·90	116·68	42·6	67·04	111·91	40·9	62·67	104·62	38·2	65·51	109·35	38·1
Domestic rates	4·70	7·84	2·9	4·13	6·90	2·5	4·09	6·84	2·5	4·41	7·35	2·6
Total	74·60	124·52	45·5	71·18	118·81	43·4	66·77	111·45	40·7	69·91	116·70	40·7
1980-81												
Income tax	51·20	73·48	26·0	46·76	67·11	23·7	38·82	55·71	19·7	46·76	67·11	22·7
NIC	11·14	15·99	5·7	11·14	15·99	5·7	13·30	19·09	6·7	11·14	15·99	5·4
VAT	8·93	12·81	4·5	8·85	12·71	4·5	9·51	13·65	4·8	8·50	12·19	4·1
Other indirect	14·31	20·54	7·3	15·43	22·15	7·8	16·00	22·96	8·1	13·89	19·93	6·8
Total of above	85·58	122·82	43·4	82·19	117·95	41·7	77·63	111·42	39·4	80·28	115·22	39·0
Domestic rates	6·20	8·90	3·1	5·42	7·79	2·8	5·27	7·57	2·7	5·79	8·31	2·8
Total	91·78	131·72	46·6	87·61	125·74	44·5	82·90	118·98	42·1	86·07	123·53	41·9
1981-82												
Income tax	57·72	74·30	26·4	53·28	68·59	24·3	45·35	58·38	20·7	53·28	68·59	23·3
NIC	15·50	19·95	7·1	15·50	19·95	7·1	16·96	21·83	7·7	15·50	19·95	6·8
VAT	9·92	12·77	4·5	9·78	12·58	4·5	10·52	13·54	4·8	9·44	12·16	4·1
Other indirect	16·54	21·29	7·6	17·83	22·95	8·1	18·55	23·88	8·5	16·14	20·77	7·1
Total of above	99·68	128·32	45·5	96·38	124·07	44·0	91·38	117·63	41·8	94·36	121·47	41·3
Domestic rates	7·58	9·76	3·5	6·65	8·56	3·0	6·53	8·41	3·0	7·09	9·12	3·1
Total	107·26	138·08	49·0	103·03	132·63	47·1	97·91	126·04	44·7	101·45	130·60	44·4
1982-83												
Income tax	61·80	74·30	26·2	56·72	68·19	24·0	47·70	57·35	20·2	56·72	68·19	23·0
NIC	19·25	23·14	8·2	19·25	23·14	8·2	20·66	24·84	8·8	19·25	23·14	7·8
VAT	10·25	12·32	4·3	10·10	12·14	4·3	10·92	13·13	4·6	9·80	11·78	4·0
Other indirect	17·24	20·73	7·3	18·56	22·32	7·9	19·40	23·32	8·2	16·82	20·22	6·8
Total of above	108·54	130·50	46·0	104·63	125·79	44·3	98·68	118·64	41·8	102·59	123·34	41·5
Domestic rates	8·24	9·90	3·5	7·26	8·73	3·1	7·20	8·66	3·1	7·73	9·29	3·1
Total	116·78	140·40	49·5	111·89	134·52	47·4	105·88	127·30	44·8	110·31	132·63	44·7

150 per cent. of average male earnings (£340·95 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1983-84												
Income tax	66·65	76·56	26·0	60·83	69·87	23·7	50·53	58·04	19·7	60·83	69·87	22·6
NIC	21·15	24·29	8·2	21·15	24·29	8·2	23·09	26·52	9·0	21·15	24·29	7·9
VAT	11·36	13·05	4·4	11·22	12·89	4·4	12·14	13·95	4·7	10·90	12·52	4·1
Other indirect	18·95	21·76	7·4	20·34	23·37	7·9	21·33	24·50	8·3	18·43	21·17	6·9
Total of above	118·10	135·66	46·0	113·54	130·42	44·3	107·09	123·01	41·8	111·31	127·85	41·5
Domestic rates	8·34	9·59	3·3	7·36	8·45	2·9	7·29	8·38	2·8	7·85	9·02	2·9
Total	126·45	145·25	49·3	120·90	138·87	47·1	114·38	131·39	44·6	119·16	136·87	44·3
1984-85												
Income tax	71·68	78·38	25·8	65·05	71·13	23·4	53·48	58·48	19·3	65·05	71·13	22·4
NIC	22·50	24·60	8·1	22·50	24·60	8·1	24·98	27·31	9·0	22·50	24·60	7·7
VAT	12·63	13·80	4·5	12·86	14·06	4·6	14·17	15·50	5·1	14·13	15·45	4·9
Other indirect	19·99	21·85	7·2	21·59	23·61	7·8	22·53	24·64	8·1	19·47	21·29	6·7
Total of above	126·79	138·63	45·7	122·00	133·39	44·0	115·17	125·93	41·5	121·15	132·47	41·7
Domestic rates	8·85	9·67	3·2	7·80	8·53	2·8	7·70	8·41	2·8	8·33	9·11	2·9
Total	135·64	148·31	48·9	129·80	141·92	46·8	122·86	134·34	44·3	129·49	141·58	44·5
1985-86												
Income tax	76·60	79·07	25·7	69·39	71·63	23·3	56·67	58·50	19·0	69·39	71·63	22·3
NIC	23·85	24·62	8·0	23·85	24·62	8·0	26·80	27·67	9·0	23·85	24·62	7·7
VAT	14·02	14·47	4·7	14·26	14·72	4·8	15·71	16·22	5·3	15·60	16·11	5·0
Other indirect	21·11	21·79	7·1	22·78	23·51	7·6	23·80	24·57	8·0	20·51	21·17	6·6
Total of above	135·58	139·96	45·5	130·28	134·49	43·8	122·98	126·96	41·3	129·35	133·53	41·5
Domestic rates	9·48	9·79	3·2	8·38	8·65	2·8	8·30	8·57	2·8	8·92	9·21	2·9
Total	145·06	149·75	48·7	138·65	143·13	46·6	131·28	135·53	44·1	138·27	142·73	44·4
1986-87												
Income tax	79·81	79·81	24·9	72·45	72·45	22·6	59·42	59·42	18·6	72·45	72·45	21·7
NIC	25·65	25·65	8·0	25·65	25·65	8·0	28·81	28·81	9·0	25·65	25·65	7·7
VAT	15·18	15·18	4·7	15·41	15·41	4·8	16·91	16·91	5·3	16·79	16·79	5·0
Other indirect	23·03	23·03	7·2	24·76	24·76	7·7	25·86	25·86	8·1	22·49	22·49	6·7
Total of above	143·68	143·68	44·9	138·26	138·26	43·2	131·00	131·00	40·9	137·38	137·38	41·1
Domestic rates	10·68	10·68	3·3	9·42	9·42	2·9	9·32	9·32	2·9	10·00	10·00	3·0
Total	154·36	154·36	48·2	147·68	147·68	46·1	140·32	140·32	43·8	147·38	147·38	44·1
1987-88												
Income tax	79·47	76·41	23·3	72·35	69·57	21·2	59·76	57·46	17·5	72·35	69·57	20·4
NIC	26·55	25·53	7·8	26·55	25·53	7·8	30·69	29·51	9·0	26·55	25·53	7·5
VAT	16·81	16·16	4·9	17·01	16·36	5·0	18·47	17·76	5·4	18·48	17·77	5·2
Other indirect	24·51	23·57	7·2	26·15	25·14	7·7	27·13	26·09	8·0	23·78	22·86	6·7
Total of above	147·33	141·66	43·2	142·07	136·60	41·7	136·95	130·82	39·9	141·15	135·72	39·7
Domestic rates	11·77	11·32	3·5	10·33	9·93	3·0	10·14	9·75	3·0	10·95	10·53	3·1
Total	159·11	152·99	46·7	152·39	146·53	44·7	146·19	140·57	42·9	152·11	146·25	42·8

200 per cent. of average male earnings (£454·60 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	54·74	105·83	29·5	50·51	97·65	27·2	42·95	83·04	23·1	49·08	94·89	25·7
NIC	7·80	15·08	4·2	7·80	15·08	4·2	12·06	23·32	6·5	7·80	15·08	4·1
Total	62·54	120·91	33·7	58·31	112·73	31·4	55·01	106·35	29·6	56·88	109·97	29·8
1979-80												
Income tax	58·53	97·70	26·8	54·39	90·79	24·9	46·95	78·37	21·5	54·39	90·79	24·0
NIC	8·78	14·66	4·0	8·78	14·66	4·0	14·21	23·72	6·5	8·78	14·66	3·9
Total	67·31	112·36	30·8	63·17	105·45	28·9	61·16	102·09	28·0	63·17	105·45	27·9
1980-81												
Income tax	72·91	104·64	27·7	66·99	96·14	25·5	58·53	84·00	22·3	66·99	96·14	24·7
NIC	11·14	15·99	4·2	11·14	15·99	4·2	17·74	25·46	6·8	11·14	15·99	4·1
Total	84·05	120·63	32·0	78·13	112·13	29·7	76·27	109·46	29·0	78·13	112·13	28·8
1981-82												
Income tax	85·04	109·47	29·1	78·59	101·17	26·9	68·01	87·55	23·3	78·59	101·17	26·1
NIC	15·50	19·95	5·3	15·50	19·95	5·3	22·61	29·11	7·7	15·50	19·95	5·1
Total	100·54	129·43	34·5	94·09	121·12	32·2	90·62	116·66	31·1	94·09	121·12	31·2
1982-83												
Income tax	89·77	107·33	28·4	82·50	99·19	26·2	71·31	85·73	22·7	82·50	99·19	25·3
NIC	19·25	23·14	6·1	19·25	23·14	6·1	27·54	33·11	8·7	19·25	23·14	5·9
Total	108·52	130·47	34·5	101·75	122·33	32·3	98·85	118·84	31·4	101·75	122·33	31·2
1983-84												
Income tax	94·99	109·11	27·8	87·22	100·19	25·5	76·18	87·51	22·3	87·22	100·19	24·6
NIC	21·15	24·29	6·2	21·15	24·29	6·2	30·78	35·36	9·0	21·15	24·29	6·0
Total	116·14	133·41	34·0	108·37	124·48	31·7	106·96	122·86	31·3	108·37	124·48	30·6
1984-85												
Income tax	102·96	112·58	27·8	94·12	102·91	25·4	81·23	88·82	22·0	94·12	102·91	24·6
NIC	22·50	24·60	6·1	22·50	24·60	6·1	33·30	36·41	9·0	22·50	24·60	5·9
Total	125·46	137·18	33·9	116·62	127·51	31·5	114·53	125·23	31·0	116·62	127·51	30·4
1985-86												
Income tax	110·68	114·26	27·9	101·07	104·34	25·5	86·45	89·24	21·8	101·07	104·34	24·6
NIC	23·85	24·62	6·0	23·85	24·62	6·0	35·73	36·88	9·0	23·85	24·62	5·8
Total	134·53	138·88	33·9	124·92	128·96	31·5	122·18	126·13	30·8	124·92	128·96	30·4
1986-87												
Income tax	116·37	116·37	27·3	106·22	106·22	24·9	90·37	90·37	21·2	106·22	106·22	24·1
NIC	25·65	25·65	6·0	25·65	25·65	6·0	38·41	38·41	9·0	25·65	25·65	5·8
Total	142·02	142·02	33·3	131·87	131·87	30·9	128·78	128·78	30·2	131·87	131·87	29·9
1987-88												
Income tax	119·22	114·63	26·2	107·90	103·75	23·7	90·45	86·97	19·9	107·90	103·75	23·0
NIC	26·55	25·53	5·8	26·55	25·53	5·8	40·91	39·34	9·0	26·55	25·53	5·7
Total	145·77	140·16	32·1	134·45	129·28	29·6	131·36	126·31	28·9	134·45	129·28	28·7

300 per cent. of average male earnings (£681·90 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	102·89	198·92	37·0	96·54	186·64	34·7	77·06	148·98	27·7	94·23	182·18	33·2
NIC	7·80	15·08	2·8	7·80	15·08	2·8	15·04	29·08	5·4	7·80	15·08	2·8
Total	110·69	214·00	39·8	104·34	201·72	37·5	92·10	178·06	33·1	102·03	197·26	36·0
1979-80												
Income tax	106·83	178·32	32·6	100·58	167·89	30·7	83·49	139·36	25·5	100·58	167·89	29·9
NIC	8·78	14·66	2·7	8·78	14·66	2·7	17·30	28·88	5·3	8·78	14·66	2·6
Total	115·61	192·98	35·3	109·36	182·55	33·4	100·79	168·24	30·7	109·36	182·55	32·5
1980-81												
Income tax	133·40	191·46	33·8	125·99	180·82	32·0	102·39	146·95	26·0	125·99	180·82	31·3
NIC	11·14	15·99	2·8	11·14	15·99	2·8	21·78	31·26	5·5	11·14	15·99	2·8
Total	144·54	207·44	36·7	137·13	196·81	34·8	124·17	178·21	31·5	137·13	196·81	34·0
1981-82												
Income tax	155·15	199·73	35·4	147·74	190·19	33·8	117·43	151·17	26·8	147·74	190·19	33·0
NIC	15·50	19·95	3·5	15·50	19·95	3·5	29·07	37·42	6·6	15·50	19·95	3·5
Total	170·65	219·68	39·0	163·24	210·14	37·3	146·50	188·59	33·5	163·24	210·14	36·5
1982-83												
Income tax	163·55	196·63	34·6	155·09	186·46	32·8	124·31	149·45	26·3	155·09	186·46	32·1
NIC	19·25	23·14	4·1	19·25	23·14	4·1	35·78	43·02	7·6	19·25	23·14	4·0
Total	182·80	219·77	38·7	174·34	209·60	36·9	160·09	192·47	33·9	174·34	209·60	36·1
1983-84												
Income tax	173·76	199·59	33·9	164·05	188·44	32·0	133·30	153·12	26·0	164·05	188·44	31·2
NIC	21·15	24·29	4·1	21·15	24·29	4·1	39·62	45·51	7·7	21·15	24·29	4·0
Total	194·91	223·89	38·0	185·20	212·73	36·1	172·92	198·63	33·7	185·20	212·73	35·3
1984-85												
Income tax	188·89	206·53	34·0	177·84	194·45	32·0	143·37	156·76	25·8	177·84	194·45	31·3
NIC	22·50	24·60	4·1	22·50	24·60	4·1	42·48	46·45	7·7	22·50	24·60	4·0
Total	211·39	231·14	38·1	200·34	219·05	36·1	185·85	203·21	33·5	200·34	219·05	35·3
1985-86												
Income tax	203·47	210·04	34·2	191·45	197·64	32·1	153·54	158·50	25·8	191·45	197·64	31·4
NIC	23·85	24·62	4·0	23·85	24·62	4·0	45·29	46·75	7·6	23·85	24·62	3·9
Total	227·32	234·66	38·2	215·30	222·26	36·2	198·83	205·25	33·4	215·30	222·26	35·3
1986-87												
Income tax	217·42	217·42	34·0	204·73	204·73	32·0	160·54	160·54	25·1	204·73	204·73	31·3
NIC	25·65	25·65	4·0	25·65	25·65	4·0	48·70	48·70	7·6	25·65	25·65	3·9
Total	243·07	243·07	38·0	230·38	230·38	36·0	209·24	209·24	32·7	230·38	230·38	35·2
1987-88												
Income tax	228·84	220·03	33·6	215·67	207·37	31·6	161·31	155·10	23·7	215·67	207·37	31·0
NIC	26·55	25·53	3·9	26·55	25·53	3·9	51·10	49·13	7·5	26·55	25·53	3·8
Total	255·39	245·56	37·5	242·22	232·90	35·5	212·41	204·24	31·1	242·22	232·90	34·8

300 per cent. of average male earnings (£1,136·50 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	234·37	453·12	50·5	226·44	437·79	48·8	157·63	304·75	34·0	223·55	432·20	47·7
NIC	7·80	15·08	1·7	7·80	15·08	1·7	15·60	30·16	3·4	7·80	15·08	1·7
Total	242·17	468·20	52·2	234·24	452·87	50·5	173·23	334·91	37·3	231·35	447·28	49·3
1979-80												
Income tax	225·28	376·05	41·2	217·78	363·53	39·8	165·36	276·02	30·3	217·78	363·53	39·3
NIC	8·78	14·66	1·6	8·78	14·66	1·6	17·55	29·30	3·2	8·78	14·66	1·6
Total	234·06	390·70	42·8	226·56	378·18	41·5	182·91	305·32	33·5	226·56	378·18	40·9
1980-81												
Income tax	279·78	401·54	42·6	270·89	388·78	41·2	206·31	296·10	31·4	270·89	388·78	40·7
NIC	11·14	15·99	1·7	11·14	15·99	1·7	22·28	31·98	3·4	11·14	15·99	1·7
Total	290·92	417·53	44·3	282·03	404·77	42·9	228·59	328·07	34·8	282·03	404·77	42·4
1981-82												
Income tax	323·28	416·16	44·3	314·39	404·72	43·1	240·18	309·19	32·9	314·39	404·72	42·5
NIC	15·50	19·95	2·1	15·50	19·95	2·1	31·00	39·91	4·2	15·50	19·95	2·1
Total	338·78	436·12	46·4	329·89	424·67	45·2	271·18	349·09	37·2	329·89	424·67	44·6
1982-83												
Income tax	342·03	411·21	43·5	331·67	399·00	42·2	252·82	303·96	32·1	331·67	399·00	41·6
NIC	19·25	23·14	2·4	19·25	23·14	2·4	38·50	46·29	4·9	19·25	23·14	2·4
Total	361·28	434·36	45·9	351·12	422·14	44·6	291·32	350·25	37·0	351·12	422·14	44·0
1983-84												
Income tax	364·42	418·60	42·6	352·77	405·22	41·3	268·75	308·70	31·4	352·77	405·22	40·7
NIC	21·15	24·29	2·5	21·15	24·29	2·5	42·30	48·59	4·9	21·15	24·29	2·4
Total	385·57	442·89	45·1	373·92	429·51	43·7	311·05	357·29	36·4	373·92	329·51	43·1
1984-85												
Income tax	396·48	433·51	42·9	383·21	419·00	41·4	291·86	319·12	31·6	383·21	419·00	40·8
NIC	22·50	24·60	2·4	22·50	24·60	2·4	45·00	49·20	4·9	22·50	24·60	2·4
Total	418·98	458·12	45·3	405·71	443·61	43·9	336·86	368·33	36·4	405·71	443·61	43·2
1985-86												
Income tax	427·27	441·07	43·0	412·85	426·19	41·6	314·16	324·31	31·7	412·85	426·19	41·0
NIC	23·85	24·62	2·4	23·85	24·62	2·4	47·70	49·24	4·8	23·85	24·62	2·4
Total	451·12	465·70	45·5	436·70	450·81	44·0	361·86	373·55	36·5	436·70	450·81	43·4
1986-87												
Income tax	461·39	461·39	43·2	446·16	446·16	41·8	333·79	333·79	31·3	446·16	446·16	41·3
NIC	25·65	25·65	2·4	25·65	25·65	2·4	51·30	51·30	4·8	25·65	25·65	2·4
Total	487·04	487·04	45·6	471·81	471·81	44·2	385·09	385·09	36·1	471·81	471·81	43·6
1987-88												
Income tax	493·50	474·51	43·4	477·69	459·31	42·0	348·06	334·67	30·6	477·69	459·31	41·5
NIC	26·55	25·53	2·3	26·55	25·53	2·3	53·10	51·06	4·7	26·55	25·53	2·3
Total	520·05	500·04	45·8	504·24	484·84	44·4	401·16	385·72	35·3	504·24	484·84	43·8

70 per cent. of average male earnings (£139·10 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	387·10	748·40	59·6	378·32	731·42	58·2	270·44	522·85	41·6	375·13	725·25	57·3
NIC	7·80	15·08	1·2	7·80	15·08	1·2	15·60	30·16	2·4	7·80	15·08	1·2
Total	394·90	763·48	60·8	386·12	746·50	59·4	286·04	553·01	44·0	382·93	740·33	58·5
1979-80												
Income tax	356·44	594·98	46·6	348·94	582·46	45·6	271·16	452·63	35·4	348·94	582·46	45·1
NIC	8·78	14·66	1·1	8·78	14·66	1·1	17·55	29·30	2·3	8·78	14·66	1·1
Total	365·22	609·64	47·7	357·72	597·12	46·8	288·71	481·93	37·7	357·72	597·12	46·3
1980-81												
Income tax	437·46	627·84	47·6	428·57	615·08	46·6	337·37	484·19	36·7	428·57	615·08	46·2
NIC	11·14	15·99	1·2	11·14	15·99	1·2	22·28	31·98	2·4	11·14	15·99	1·2
Total	448·60	643·83	48·8	439·71	631·07	47·8	359·65	516·17	39·1	439·71	631·07	74·4
1981-82												
Income tax	498·36	641·55	48·8	489·47	630·10	47·9	393·80	506·95	38·6	489·47	630·10	47·5
NIC	15·50	19·95	1·5	15·50	19·95	1·5	31·00	39·91	3·0	15·50	19·95	1·5
Total	513·86	661·50	50·3	504·97	650·06	49·4	424·80	546·85	41·6	504·97	650·06	49·0
1982-83												
Income tax	530·91	638·30	48·2	520·75	626·08	47·3	414·29	498·09	37·6	520·75	626·08	46·8
NIC	19·25	23·14	1·7	19·25	23·14	1·7	38·50	46·29	35	19·25	23·14	1·7
Total	550·16	661·44	49·9	540·00	649·23	49·0	452·79	544·38	41·1	540·00	649·23	48·5
1983-84												
Income tax	569·62	654·30	47·6	557·97	640·92	46·6	439·42	504·75	36·7	557·97	640·92	46·1
NIC	21·15	24·29	1·8	21·15	24·29	1·8	42·30	48·59	3·5	21·15	24·29	1·7
Total	590·77	678·60	49·4	579·12	665·22	48·4	481·72	553·34	40·2	579·12	665·22	47·9
1984-85												
Income tax	618·48	676·25	47·8	605·21	661·74	46·7	478·08	522·74	36·9	605·21	661·74	46·3
NIC	22·50	24·60	1·7	22·50	24·60	1·7	45·00	49·20	3·5	22·50	24·60	1·7
Total	640·98	700·85	49·5	627·71	686·34	48·5	523·08	571·94	40·4	627·71	686·34	48·0
1985-86												
Income tax	665·47	686·97	47·9	651·05	672·08	46·9	515·61	532·27	37·1	651·05	672·08	46·4
NIC	23·85	24·62	1·7	23·85	24·62	1·7	47·70	49·24	3·4	23·85	24·62	1·7
Total	689·32	711·59	49·6	674·90	696·71	48·6	563·31	581·51	40·5	674·90	696·71	48·1
1986-87												
Income tax	717·47	717·47	48·0	702·24	702·24	47·0	535·04	535·04	37·2	702·24	702·24	46·6
NIC	25·65	25·65	1·7	25·65	25·65	1·7	51·30	51·30	3·4	25·65	25·65	1·7
Total	743·12	743·12	49·7	727·89	727·89	48·7	606·34	606·34	40·6	727·89	727·89	48·3
1987-88												
Income tax	766·26	736·77	48·2	750·45	721·57	47·2	590·51	367·79	37·1	750·45	721·57	46·7
NIC	26·55	25·53	1·7	26·55	25·53	1·7	53·10	51·06	3·3	26·55	25·53	1·7
Total	792·81	762·30	49·8	777·00	747·10	48·8	643·61	618·84	40·5	777·00	747·10	48·4

1,000 per cent. of average male earnings (£2,273·00 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	618·17	1,195·13	66·6	609·39	1,178·16	65·7	475·02	98·38	51·2	606·20	1,171·99	65·0
NIC	7·80	15·08	0·8	7·80	15·08	0·8	15·60	30·16	1·7	7·80	15·08	0·8
Total	625·97	1,210·21	67·5	617·19	1,193·24	66·5	490·62	948·56	52·9	614·00	1,187·07	65·8
1979-80												
Income tax	553·18	923·39	50·6	545·68	910·87	49·9	453·85	757·58	41·5	545·68	910·87	49·6
NIC	8·78	14·66	0·8	8·78	14·66	0·8	17·55	29·30	1·6	8·78	14·66	0·8
Total	561·96	[illegible]	51·4	554·46	925·52	50·7	471·40	786·88	43·1	554·46	925·52	50·4
1980-81												
Income tax	673·98	967·30	51·3	665·09	954·54	50·6	561·28	805·55	42·7	665·09	954·54	50·3
NIC	11·14	15·99	0·8	1·14	15·99	0·8	22·28	31·98	1·7	11·14	15·99	0·8
Total	685·12	983·28	52·1	676·23	970·52	51·5	583·56	837·52	44·4	676·23	970·52	51·1
1981-82												
Income tax	760·98	979·62	52·2	752·09	968·18	51·5	646·55	832·32	44·3	752·09	968·18	51·2
NIC	15·50	19·95	1·1	15·50	19·95	1·1	31·00	39·91	2·1	15·50	19·95	1·1
Total	776·48	999·58	53·2	767·59	988·13	52·6	677·55	872·22	46·4	767·59	988·13	52·3
1982-83												
Income tax	814·23	978·92	51·7	804·07	966·71	51·1	684·37	822·80	43·5	804·07	966·71	50·7
NIC	19·25	23·14	1·2	19·25	23·14	1·2	38·50	46·29	2·4	19·25	23·14	1·2
Total	833·48	1,002·02	53·0	823·32	989·85	52·3	722·87	869·08	45·9	823·32	989·85	51·9
1983-84												
Income tax	877·42	1,007·86	51·3	865·77	994·48	50·6	730·98	839·65	42·7	865·77	994·48	50·3
NIC	21·15	24·29	1·2	21·15	24·29	1·2	42·30	48·59	2·5	21·15	24·29	1·2
Total	898·57	1,032·16	52·5	886·92	1,018·78	51·9	773·28	888·24	45·2	886·92	1,018·78	51·5
1984-85												
Income tax	951·48	1,040·36	51·4	938·21	1,025·85	50·7	794·52	868·73	42·9	938·21	1,025·85	50·4
NIC	22·50	24·60	1·2	22·50	24·60	1·2	45·00	49·20	2·4	22·50	24·60	1·2
Total	973·98	1,064·96	52·6	960·71	1,050·45	51·9	839·52	917·94	45·4	960·71	1,050·45	51·6
1985-86												
Income tax	1,022·77	1,055·81	51·5	1,008·35	1,040·93	50·8	855·61	883·25	43·1	1,008·35	1,040·93	50·4
NIC	23·85	24·62	1·2	23·85	24·62	1·2	47·70	49·24	2·4	23·85	24·62	1·2
Total	1,046·62	1,080·44	52·7	1,032·20	1,065·55	52·0	903·31	932·50	45·5	1,032·20	1,065·55	51·6
1986-87												
Income tax	1,101·59	1,101·59	51·6	1,086·36	1,086·36	50·9	922·78	922·78	43·2	1,086·36	1,086·36	50·6
NIC	25·65	25·65	1·2	25·65	25·65	1·2	51·30	51·30	2·4	25·65	25·65	1·2
Total	1,127·24	1,127·24	52·8	1,112·01	1,112·01	52·1	974·08	974·08	45·6	1,112·01	1,112·01	51·8
1987-88												
Income tax	1,175·40	1,130·17	51·7	1,159·59	1,114·97	51·0	986·99	949·01	43·4	1,159·59	1,114·97	50·7
NIC	26·55	25·53	1·2	26·55	25·53	1·2	53·10	51·06	2·3	26·55	25·53	1·2
Total	1,201·95	1,155·70	52·9	1,186·14	1,140·50	52·2	1,040·09	1,000·07	45·8	1,186·14	1,140·50	51·9

2,000 per cent. of average male earnings (£4,546·00 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married 2 children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income	£ per week	£ per week 1986-87 prices	Per cent. of gross income
1978-79												
Income tax	1,388·41	2,684·27	74·8	1,379·63	2,667·29	74·3	1,236·34	2,390·27	66·6	1,376·44	2,661·13	74·0
NIC	7·80	15·08	0·4	7·80	15·08	0·4	15·60	30·16	0·8	7·80	15·08	0·4
Total	1,396·21	2,699·35	75·2	1,387·43	2,682·37	74·8	1,251·94	2,420·43	67·5	1,384·24	2,676·21	74·4
1979-80												
Income tax	1,208·98	2,018·07	55·3	1,201·48	2,005·55	55·0	1,106·35	1,846·76	50·6	1,201·48	2,005·55	54·8
NIC	8·78	14·66	0·4	8·78	14·66	0·4	17·55	29·30	0·8	8·78	14·66	0·4
Total	1,217·76	2,032·73	55·7	1,210·26	2,020·21	55·4	1,123·90	1,876·05	51·4	1,210·26	2,020·21	55·2
1980-81												
Income tax	1,462·38	2,098·81	55·6	1,453·49	2,086·05	55·3	1,347·95	1,934·58	51·3	1,453·49	2,086·05	55·1
NIC	11·14	15·99	0·4	11·14	15·99	0·4	22·28	31·98	0·8	11·14	15·99	0·4
Total	1,473·52	2,114·79	56·1	1,464·63	2,102·04	55·7	1,370·23	1,966·55	52·1	1,464·63	2,102·4	55·6
1981-82												
Income tax	1,636·38	2,106·54	56·1	1,627·49	2,095·10	55·8	1,521·95	1959·23	52·2	1,627·49	2,095·10	55·6
NIC	15·50	19·95	0·5	15·50	19·95	0·5	31·00	39·91	1·1	15·50	19·95	0·5
Total	1,651·88	2,126·50	56·6	1,642·99	2,115·05	56·3	1,552·95	1,999·14	53·2	1,642·99	2,115·05	56·1
1982-83												
Income tax	1,758·63	2,114·35	55·9	1,748·47	2,102·13	55·5	1,628·45	1,957·84	51·7	1,748·47	2,102·13	55·3
NIC	19·25	23·14	0·6	19·25	23·14	0·6	38·50	46·29	1·2	19·25	23·14	0·6
Total	1,777·88	2,137·49	56·5	1,767·72	2,125·28	56·2	1,666·95	2,004·12	53·0	1,767·72	2,125·28	56·0
1983-84												
Income tax	1,903·42	2,186·39	55·7	1,891·77	2,173·01	55·3	1,754·85	2,015·74	51·3	1,891·77	2,173·01	55·1
NIC	21·15	24·29	0·6	21·15	24·29	0·6	42·30	48·59	1·2	21·15	24·29	0·6
Total	1,924·57	2,210·69	56·3	1,912·92	2,197·31	55·9	1,797·15	2,064·33	52·5	1,912·92	2,197·31	55·7
1984-85												
Income tax	2,061·48	2,254·04	55·7	2,048·21	2,239·53	55·4	1,902·96	2,080·71	51·4	2,048·21	2,239·53	55·2
NIC	22·50	24·60	0·6	22·50	24·60	0·6	45·00	49·20	1·2	22·50	24·60	0·6
Total	2,083·98	2,278·64	56·3	2,070·71	2,264·13	56·0	1,947·96	2,129·92	52·6	2,070·71	2,264·13	55·8
1985-86												
Income tax	2,213·77	2,285·30	55·8	2,199·35	2,270·41	55·4	2,045·54	2,111·63	51·5	2,199·35	2,270·41	55·2
NIC	23·85	24·62	0·6	23·85	24·62	0·6	47·70	49·24	1·2	23·85	24·62	0·6
Total	2,237·62	2,309·92	56·4	2,223·20	2,295·03	56·0	2,093·24	2,160·87	52·7	2,223·20	2,295·03	55·8
1986-87												
Income tax	2,381·99	2,381·99	55·8	2,366·76	2,366·76	55·5	2,203·18	2,203·18	51·6	2,366·76	2,366·76	55·3
NIC	25·65	25·65	0·6	25·65	25·65	0·6	51·30	51·30	1·2	25·65	25·65	0·6
Total	2,407·64	2,407·64	56·4	2,392·41	2,392·41	56·1	2,254·48	2,254·48	52·8	2,392·41	2,392·41	55·9
1987-88												
Income tax	2,539·20	2,441·49	55·9	2523·39	2,426·29	55·5	2,350·79	2,260·33	51·7	2,523·39	2,426·29	55·3
NIC	26·55	25·53	0·6	26·55	25·53	0·6	53·10	51·06	1·2	26·55	25·53	0·6
Total	2,565·75	2,467·02	56·4	2,549·94	2,451·82	56·1	2,403·89	2,311·39	52·9	2,549·94	2,451·82	55·9

Notes to Tables

Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the tax units have no other tax reliefs apart from the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay class 1 National Insurance contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for National Insurance contributions are financial year averages.

2. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The levels of average earnings in each year are as follows:

	£ per week
1978-79	92·80
1979-80	109·30
1980-81	131·40
1981-82	145·90
1982-83	157·40
1983-84	171·00

	£ per week
1984-85	185·00
1985-86	198·50
1986-87	[1]213·40
1987-88	[2]227·30

[1] Assuming growth of 7½ per cent. on 1985-86.
[2] Assuming growth of 6¼ per cent. on 1986-87.

3. The two-earner married couple is assumed to have joint earnings of the various multiples of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that the joint earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

4. For the married couple with two children, the percentage column expresses taxes etc as percentages of gross earnings plus child benefit. For this purpose, financial year averages are used for child benefit.

5. The estimates of indirect taxes are derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. Estimates cannot reliably be made outside the income range for which figures are shown. There are also quite wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and compositions and, because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from different Family Expenditure Surveys.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 30 March 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Attorney-General if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Law Officers Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 24 March by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, at column 98, when she affirmed that there are no plans at present to make the ethnic surveys compulsory and that the results of the survey will be published.

Information on response rates in the existing new entrant surveys is not readily available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

County Palatine

Mr. Pike asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what official duties he undertook, in what places, in the course of his last visit to the County Palatine.

Mr. Tebbit: My most recent visit to the County Palatine was on 10 March, when I attended the annual lunch of the Central and West Lancashire chamber of commerce at the Imperial hotel, Blackpool.

PRIME MINISTER

Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister on what date she received an invitation to open Ysbyty Gwynedd at Bangor; and on what date she replied to that invitation.

The Prime Minister: The programme for my visit to north Wales was finalised, in the usual way, shortly before the visit took place.

AIDS-infected Children

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination at ministerial level between the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Education and Science concerning possible changes to the policy of allowing AIDS-infected children to attend school without informing the parents of other children.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Social Services keep in close touch about policy issues concerned with AIDS and young people. Government policy remains as stated in the guidance issued last year by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office: that children infected with the virus have a right to confidentiality about their condition if they and their parents so choose. If such information is disclosed it should be strictly confined to those within the school who need to know. There is no risk of the AIDS virus being transmitted through normal social contact in a school setting, provided that sensible hygiene precautions are observed.

United States Assistant Secretary of State (Meeting)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister on what dates she met United States Assistant Secretary of State Eliot Abrams during 1986; and what was discussed.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 4 March at column 598.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Council of Ministers

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present, four meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for April.

The Consumer Affairs Council on 7 April is expected to consider a proposed directive on dangerous imitations of consumer products and a progress report on the proposed safety of toys directive.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 7 April to discuss a number of measures in the rolling action programme for the completion of the internal market.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet from 26 to 27 April. It will discuss the ex novo review of the future financing arrangements for the Community; consider a draft negotiating mandate for an EC/Hungary trade and economic agreement; the next EC/Algeria Cooperation Council to be held under the terms of the EC/Algeria cooperation agreement; and the guidelines for the provision of EC aid to Asian and Latin American countries. Following its brief discussion in March, the Council will have a fuller discussion of the current climate in EC/US relations.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 27/28 April, and provided there is no earlier agreement, is likely to continue its discussions on the 1987 price-fixing proposals, which will include reviews of the green currency system and the oils and fats régime.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Turks and Caicos Islands

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to publish for consultation the report of the constitutional commission on the Turks and Caicos Islands chaired by Sir Roy Marshall before reaching a final decision.

Mr. Eggar: We intend shortly to make public the report of the constitutional commission on the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Hong Kong

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 2 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *542*, to the hon. Member for Stockton, North on the responsibilities of Her Majesty's Government for the people of Hong Kong, whether contingency plans exist in the event of a nuclear accident at the Daya bay nuclear power station necessitating evacuation for refuge in the United Kingdom for citizens of Hong Kong seeking refuge.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government are preparing plans to make all possible provision for ensuring the safety of Hong Kong people in the event of an accident at the nuclear power station now under construction at Daya bay. The Hong Kong Government intend to complete these plans well before the station is commissioned in 1992.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer on 2 December 1986, *Official Report*, column *542*, to the hon. Member for Stockton, North on the responsibilities of Her Majesty's Government for the people of Hong Kong, if he will provide an estimate of how much money Britain has earned from Hong Kong over the last decade.

Mr. Renton: Commercial and financial transactions between Britain and Hong Kong are complex and their net value cannot readily be estimated. Although Hong Kong is, after Japan, the UK's second largest export market in the Far East, for many years, the visible trade balance has been in Hong Kong's favour. No reliable estimate of capital flows is available.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government will now provide a contingency fund for assistance to businesses in Hong Kong in the event of an accident at Daya bay nuclear power plant; and whether his Department has made any estimate of the likely cost of a worst case nuclear accident at Daya bay under adverse meteorological conditions.

Mr. Renton: Any question of assistance to businesses in Hong Kong is a matter for the Hong Kong Government. The Hong Kong Government have requested their consultants, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, to prepare an accident assessment report on the Daya bay power station. Once this report has been received and examined, the Hong Kong Government will consider the possible implications for Hong Kong of any accident at the Daya bay plant.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Eggar: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Eliot Abrams

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he or any of his officials met United States Assistant Secretary of State Eliot Abrams in London during 1986; and on what dates.

Mr. Eggar: We maintain a regular dialogue at all levels with members of the United States Administration on a wide range of international issues.

Blowpipe Missiles

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken to investigate allegations in the Tower commission report that representatives of Short Bros. held discussions with United States Government officials regarding supplying Blowpipe missiles to the Contra forces.

Mr. Eggar: There is no evidence to suggest that Short Brothers has acted in breach of United Kingdom law. Blowpipe has not been supplied to the Contras. The question of an investigation does not arise.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Burglaries

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the number of domestic burglaries was in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. Mellor: Police in England and Wales recorded 252,800 burglaries in dwellings in 1979 and 506,000 in 1986. These statistics are published annually in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", and, for 1986, in the Home Office statistical bulletin 4/87. Results from crime surveys imply that much of this increase in recorded offences of burglaries in dwellings was due to a rise in the proportion of such offences being reported to the police. This rise in reporting is discussed in chapter 2 of the 1984 Command Paper (Cmnd. 9621: paras 2.6 to 2.13).

Life Sentences

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time served by those who have completed their sentence of life imprisonment for murder.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) on 17 March at columns 451-54.

Harmondsworth Detention Centre

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost per inmate of running the Harmondsworth detention centre by Securicor Services Ltd.; and what is the cost of running comparable services with prison officers.

Mr. Waddington: The estimated daily cost of detaining a person in immigration service detention centres, including Harmondsworth, is £115. This figure includes transport, escort and running costs, and the cost of employing staff from Securicor Ltd. The cost per day of detaining a person held under the Immigration Act 1971 in a prison department establishment, though not entirely comparable, is estimated at £34.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many extra police officers have been released for street duty as a result of the reorganisation of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that by April 1988 some 218 police officers will be released for operational duties as a result of the force reorganisation. It is not possible to say how many of these will be allocated to street duty.

Chief Superintendent Kenneth John Etheridge

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the resignation of Chief Superintendent Kenneth John Etheridge and his subsequent appointment with Lonhro plc.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that Chief Superintendent Etheridge retired on 31 August 1977. The subsequent employment of any officer who has left the Metropolitan police is a matter for the individual concerned.

Prisoners (Remand Costs)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the daily cost of keeping a prisoner on remand in a police cell in *(a)* London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Mellor: The average cost per prisoner per night of prisoners held in police cells in the Metropolitan police district is currently about £120.

The cost represents actual expenditure by the police in staff, accommodation and services, and is determined by various factors, in particular the number of prisoners and the number of locations at which they are held.

The cost of prisoners held by other police forces varies considerably according to circumstancies. Comprehensive figures could only be produced at disproportionate cost.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Bail

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer of 25 March to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, he will take steps to collect centrally the statistics of the occasions in the last five years on which a person on bail to which the police had objected committed offences of *(a)* murder and *(b)* rape.

Mr. Mellor: Retrospective studies of this type would not be feasible but we are considering the possibility of initiating studies to obtain information of the kind requested in future.

Murder and Rape

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases in the past 20 years people who have already been convicted of *(a)* murder and *(b)* rape on one occasion have been convicted of a similar offence committed after the first conviction.

Mr. Mellor: In the past 20 years (including provisional information for 1986 and 1987) seven persons already convicted of murder in England and Wales have been convicted of a further murder committed after the first conviction, including one person whose second murder was committed in Scotland, and one in Northern Ireland. Two of the later murders were committed in prison and five while the offender was out of prison on licence. In addition, one murder was committed by a person who was on bail for a separate murder for which he was also subsequently convicted. Corresponding information for rape is not available.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Sizes

Mr. Alan Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, further to his answer of 15 January, *Official Report*, column *260*, he will make available the evidence derived from curriculum modelling and school inspections upon which were based the indications of size thresholds for schools in the White Paper, "Better Schools."

Mr. Dunn: Further information is provided in a circular expected to be issued shortly.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Teachers (Ealing)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give directions under section 99 of the Education Act 1944 to ensure that teachers in the London borough of Ealing receive their monthly remuneration at the end of March; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

School Facilities

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what financial incentives he has offered local education authorities to assist them in opening up school educational facilities to a wider range of students;

(2) what financial assistance he has offered local education authorities attempting to extend the community use of schools.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local education authorities to consider what resources, within the total available to them, can be allocated for this purpose.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures indicating what funds are presently committed to initiatives helping schools to broaden their *(a)* curricula and *(b)* facilities to make them more generally accessible to their local communities.

Mr. Dunn: These are matters for LEAs themselves to take a view upon in the light of the resources available to them. My right hon. Friend is not therefore in a position to publish figures showing the level of funds committed.

School Rolls (Kirklees)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what correspondence he has had with Kirklees metropolitan borough council local education authority regarding falling school rolls and possible local school closures.

Mr. Dunn: None, since my right hon. Friend announced his decisions last year on a number of proposals under sections 12 and 15 of the Education Act 1980.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with Kirklees local education authority on falling school rolls and the possible closure of schools.

Mr. Dunn: None since I met repesentatives of the LEA on 26 March 1986 to hear their representations about four proposals then before my right hon. Friend.

School Maintenance (Rotherham)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the sums requested to bring all school buildings in the metropolitan borough of Rotherham into satisfactory condition; and what assessment he has made of the cost of such maintenance in one year's time.

Mr. Dunn: Such assessments are a matter for the Rotherham local education authority.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Programme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total value in constant prices of all aid flows from Her Majesty's Government to developing countries since 1960.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross public expenditure on overseas aid at constant 1985 prices for 1961-1985 was as follows:

	£ million
1961	1,277
1962	1,198
1963	1,174
1964	1,339
1965	1,302
1966	1,350
1967	1,285
1968	1,248
1969	1,178
1970	1,142
1971	1,328
1972	1,246
1973	1,223
1974	1,302
1975	1,266
1976	1,333
1977	1,302
1978	1,438
1979	1,570
1980	1,347
1981	1,480
1982	1,259
1983	1,297
1984	1,393
1985	1,317

Statistics for 1960 are not available.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the total aid flows from the United Kingdom, in cash terms and as a percentage of the world total for both *(a)* the 29 poorest countries in Africa; and *(b)* all African nations for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1985, Britain's gross public expenditure on aid through bilateral and multilateral channels to the 29 poorest countries in Africa totalled some £380 million, and to all the African countries amounted to some £570 million.

Comparable figures for total aid flows are not available on a public expenditure basis. The OECD estimates total gross official development assistance in 1985 to have been $7·8 billion to the 29 poorest and about $13·6 billion to all African countries.

Drugs

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what priority his Department gives to tackling drug manufacture and abuse in developing countries as part of their overall strategy for development.

Mr. Chris Patten: We recognise the importance of countries taking measures against drug manufacture and abuse as part of their development strategy, and we are ready to assist where appropriate, as for example in the Caribbean and Pakistan. I would refer the hon. Member

to the recent report on drugs and development produced by the development assistance committee of the OECD, a copy of which I have placed in the Library.

Nicaragua

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial assistance Her Majesty's Government provide for the Government of Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: There is no regular programme of financial assistance to the Nicaraguan Government. However, in 1986 we provided £82,500 in financial assistance to Nicaragua, for displaced persons, through Christian Aid. In addition, we co-finance small development projects with British voluntary agencies and contribute to humanitarian relief work in central America, including Nicaragua. Nicaragua also benefits from European Community aid to the region, to which Britain makes a substantial contribution.

AIDS

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the World Health Organisation's call for further funding for its AIDS programme following the visit to him on 24 March of Dr. Jonathan Mann, the director in charge of this programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have told Dr. Mann that, subject to parliamentary approval, Britain intends to contribute £3 million in the financial year 1987-88 to the World Health Organisation's special programme on AIDS. This contribution represents about 12 per cent. of the estimated financial requirements of the special programme in 1987.

Tropical Forests

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration has been given towards the creation of a special tropical forest fund to which the timber industry, development aid agencies and Governments in the north would contribute, to be used for large-scale regeneration projects in degraded tropical forests for creating forest areas of biological importance so as to conserve their genetic resources.

Mr. Chris Patten: Governments and the international tropical timber industry subscribe to the international tropical timber agreement, which embraces both producing and consuming nations. It aims to promote policies for the sustainable utilisation and conservation of tropical forests. Concessional aid finance for this purpose is already available through resources co-ordinated under the Food and Agriculture Organisation's tropical forestry action plan.

WALES

Museums (Visitors)

98. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the number of people visiting museums in Wales.

99. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the number of people visiting museums in south Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available in the form requested.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Surveys of the ethnic origin of new entrants to my Department have been carried out in agreement with the Council of Civil Service Unions, on the basis of voluntary self-classification. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system. However, the Civil Service and the Council of Civil Service Unions are keen to improve the data base, and are discussing practical ways in which this can be done.

The response rate in the existing new entrant survey in my Department is 100 per cent.

Dairy Industry

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of jobs which will be lost *(a)* directly and *(b)* indirectly, in the dairy industry in Wales, as a result of the recently announced cutbacks.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have made no such estimates. The effects of the milk quota cutbacks will differ from farm to farm according to the decisions taken by individual farmers. As far as the manufacturing sector is concerned, the extent of possible redundancies will depend on a variety of factors, including the industry's response to changes in the market.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales why the Welsh Office is rejecting applications for assistance from public bodies in Wales for translation and printing literature in the Welsh language, of a type for which help has been forthcoming in the past; and if he will make a statement on the level of resources available for the Welsh Office's translation unit.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office has not changed its policy of helping public bodies in Wales with translation into the Welsh language. It has always considered each case on its merits while giving priority to the work of the Welsh Office and to publications for other Government Departments. The level of resources to do this is determined by current demands on the translation unit.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the total number of representations he has received concerning a new Welsh Language Act since launching his consultation exercise last autumn; and how many of these representations came from *(a)* bodies whom he had invited to respond, *(b)* councils, bodies, groups and associations who had not been directly approached by him and *(c)* individuals.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: To date, 1,300 representations have been received. Of those originally invited to comment, 115 have so far responded. A detailed analysis by source of all other representations will be undertaken after 31 March.

Gwynedd DHA

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is satisfied, in the light of last year's report by the Health Advisory Service on psychiatric care in Gwynedd, that the Gwynedd health authority has adequate funds to undertake its responsibilities in this field.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I am satisfied that the total recurring revenue resources made available to Gwynedd DHA, which have risen in the period 1978-79 to 1987-88 by 39 per cent. in real terms, are generally adequate to enable it to provide appropriate services in all sectors. We are currently considering proposals from DHAs for additional central financial support for developments which could make a significant contribution to the enhancement of psychiatric services and expect to announce a decision shortly.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I shall reply as soon as possible.

EMPLOYMENT

Tourism (Essex)

Mr. Amess asked the Paymaster General what effect in terms of job creation is expected from the £5 million more to be allocated in the field of tourism in *(a)* Essex and *(b)* Basildon.

Mr. Trippier: The recently announced additional £5 million for Government support for tourism represented the total increase in Government funds to be made available to the English tourist board and the British Tourist Authority in 1987-88 compared with the current financial year. About half this increase has been allocated to the scheme of selective financial assistance to tourism projects operated by the ETB under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. The balance will be used mainly to enhance the marketing activities of the ETB and the BTA.

It is not possible to say what effect these increases in funding will have on job creation in Essex or in Basildon. However, tourism in the area should benefit indirectly from the effects of increased marketing activity. Of more direct potential benefit to job creation in the area is the section 4 scheme. The ETB is always ready to consider applications from tourism operators and developers for support for projects which meet the scheme's criteria.

Occupational Lung Cancer

Mr. Blair asked the Paymaster General what investigations are under way to establish the risk of lung cancer in the manufacture of those chromate chemicals other than zinc, calcium and strontium chromates recently the subject of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council report on occupational lung cancer.

Mr. Trippier: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council in its review considered the evidence for lung cancer risk in the manufacture of chromates was limited to the zinc, calcium and strontium compounds. The Health and Safety Executive is not carrying out or funding research on other chromates.

Tourism (London)

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General what is his policy towards the level of hotel provision in London in the light of the report "Tourism in London: Resident Opinion Survey", by the London Tourist Board and Convention Bureau, a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. Trippier: The Government recognise that hotel capacity in London needs to increase if the United Kingdom is to continue to benefit fully from the growth in world tourism predicted over the next few years. A large number of respondents to the resident opinion survey agreed that tourism made a positive contribution to amenities and employment in London and that there was a need to cater effectively for the requirements of visitors. The survey's findings are being taken into account by the London tourism forum which is currently co-ordinating a tourism strategy for London.

Scotland (Labour Statistics)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General how many people have been employed in the administrative regions of Scotland in each year since 1980 in *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive and *(b)* Her Majesty's factory inspectorate.

Mr. Trippier: The number of people employed in Scotland in each year since 1980 in *(a)* the Health and Safety Executive (including Her Majesty's factory inspectorate) and *(b)* Her Majesty's factory inspectorate are:

	HSE	*Factory inspectorate*[1]
[2]1980	232	148
1981	231	154
1982	210	135
1983	197	135
1984	188	130
1985	189	115
1986	175	110
1987	179	109

[1] This does not include specialist factory inspectors in the Field Consultant Group, who were transferred to HSE's new Technology Division in 1985.

[2] March.

Figures by administrative region could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Factory Inspectorate (Scotland)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General what have been the additional areas of enforcement responsibility in Scotland taken by the factory inspectorate since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: The main additional areas of enforcement responsibility taken by Her Majesty's factory inspectorate since 1979 are as follows:

1981
The Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.
The Health and Safety (Dangerous Pathogens) Regulations.
The Control of Lead at Work Regulations.
The Diving Operations at Work Regulations.
1982
The Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations.
The Notification of New Substances Regulations.
1983
The Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations.
1984
The Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations.
The Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations.
The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations.
1985
The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations.
1986
The Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations.
The Ionising Radiations Regulations.
The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Substances Regulations.

Major Injuries (Scottish Manufacturing Industry)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General how many fatal and major injuries there have been at work in manufacturing industry in each year since 1981 by administrative region of Scotland.

Mr. Trippier: The reported number of injuries at work are as follows:

Injuries in manufacturing industry in Scotland, reported to Her Majesty's factory inspectorate

	Fatal	*Major*
1981	21	463
1982	19	428
1983	20	374
1984	19	424
[1]1985	20	419

[1] Provisional.

I regret that figures for each region of Scotland are not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Figures for 1986 onwards are not yet available.

Training Schemes

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General how many people in Batley and Spen have benefited from the training for enterprise scheme since its inception; and if he will provide the same information for the wider opportunities training programme.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the number of people assisted under the training for enterprise scheme and the wider opportunities training programme for the Manpower Services Commission's Bradford Calderdale and Kirklees vocational education and training group area are as follows:

Financial year	*Training for Enterprise*	*Wider Opportunities*
1984-85	62	541
1985-86	383	599
1986-87[1]	793	941

[1] Figures are for the period 1 April 1986 to 28 February 1987.

Employment Transfer Scheme

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General how many people have benefited from the employment transfer scheme; if he has any information about the average distances involved in the transfer of such people; and if he will provide the same information for the free forward fare scheme.

Mr. John Lee: During the year ended 31 March 1986, 3,300 unemployed people were helped by the employment transfer scheme and a further 11,350 received free forward fares to enable them to take up new jobs. I regret that we have no information on the average distances of the moves under either of the schemes. Both these schemes were discontinued in April 1986.

Shildon Bridge Rail Works (Ex-Employees)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Paymaster General what information is available to his Department's local office as to how many employees laid off by Shildon Bridge rail works have since found work.

Mr. Lee: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Health and Safety Inspectors (Scotland)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Paymaster General what percentage of workplaces in each administrative region of Scotland have been visited in the past four years by health and safety inspectors.

Mr. Trippier: Details of the percentage of workplaces visited in each administrative region of Scotland are not available. The number of visits made in Scotland by inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are:

Number of visits

Inspectorate			
Factory	*Agricultural*	*Mines and Quarries*	*Nuclear Installations*
[1] January 1983-December 1983 10,724	April 1983-March 1984 3,018	January 1983-December 1983 2,291	January 1983-December 1983 72
[1 2] January 1984-March 1985 11,030	April 1984-March 1985 2,630	[2] January 1984-March 1985 2,691	January 1984-December 1984 57
April 1985-March 1986 20,337	April 1985-March 1986 3,040	April 1985-March 1986 1,719	January 1985-December 1985 72
April 1986-March 1987 (not available)	April 1986-March 1987 (not available)	April 1986-December 1986 1,089	January 1986-December 1986 57

[1] These figures exclude visits to transient sites eg construction sites and visits to investigate accidents and incidents. The number of investigations were recorded, but visits were not (ie an investigation involving several visits was counted only once.)
[2] 15 month period to bring in recording by financial year.

Mr. Michael Lush

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General when he expects the Health and Safety Executive to publish its findings on the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Michael Lush.

Mr. Trippier: As a result of its investigation into the incident in which Mr. Michael Lush was killed, the Health and Safety Executive has decided to prosecute the BBC under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. A formal report of the investigation will not be published.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General what are the month-by-month unemployment figures for the borough of Knowsley since January 1984.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the number of unemployed claimants in the Knowsley local authority district between January 1984 and February 1987. These figures are affected by the change in the timing of the compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986.

Unemployed claimants in Knowsley local authority district

	Number
1984	
January	21,462
February	21,357
March	21,003
April	20,659
May	20,593
June	20,019
July	20,144
August	20,074
September	20,816
October	20,487
November	20,417
December	20,323
1985	
January	20,724
February	20,629
March	20,386
April	20,397
May	20,447
June	20,146
July	20,148
August	20,045
September	20,510
October	20,222
November	20,065
December	20,038
1986	
January	20,487
February	20,169
March	19,989
April	20,170
May	20,049
June	19,797
July	19,764
August	19,421
September	19,498
October	19,120
November	18,803
December	18,844
1987	
January	19,001
February	18,743

Manpower Services Commission

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the names of the members of each of the area manpower boards of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

YTS Trainees

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General how many YTS trainees are currently working in the Department of Employment and Manpower Services Commission; and what are their employment status, terms and conditions, including remunerations.

Mr. Trippier: None at present, but the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission propose to introduce a YTS scheme this Easter in four different parts of the country. Initially there will be places for 120 clerical trainees. About 20 will have employee statutes and the same terms and conditions and remunerations as Civil Servie clerical grades. About 100 will be non-employees who will receive the appropriate standard YTS allowances. The scheme will be an equal opportunity training programme, and all trainees will receive the same protection as employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

School Facilities

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General (1) whether his Department has investigated the possibility of using spare capacity in existing school buildings for the purpose of adult education and training;

(2) if he will request the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to undertake a feasibility study of the joint use of school premises for the education of both children and adults; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: My Department, via the Manpower Services Commission, contracts with various bodies to run adult training courses at the most cost effective rates. It is up to the training providers concerned, which will include local education authorities, to satisfy the Manpower Services Commission that the general training arrangements including the provision of accommodation, are adequate. It is for each local education authority to decide how best to use the facilities available to it.

Small Firms

Mr. Couchman asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to encourage closer links between the small firms service, local enterprise agencies and other support organisations.

Mr. Trippier: The Government encourage the small firms service, local enterprise agencies and other organisations to work together to form local networks which can provide a supportive environment in which small businesses can flourish. The small firms service has in fact long co-operated actively with LEAs and others in its role of assisting small companies.

To demonstrate the positive advantages of even closer co-operation a new initiative is being undertaken in the Yorkshire and Humberside region from April this year. This will involve LEAs being offered extra counselling support for their clients from the small firms service. Prior to the start of the initiative, the small firms service's regional counselling team will be considerably reinforced and a firm of consultants will be engaged to provide independent monitoring of the initiative. The extra support provided to local enterprise agencies participating in the initiative will be in addition to any assistance they may receive under the Government's local enterprise agency grant scheme.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if any recruits to the job training scheme are to be over 25 years of age; and what arrangements will be made to pay a training allowance to those recruits who are not entitled to unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Availability for Work Test

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will detail the cost of conducting the availability for work test experiment on the over-50s age group of unemployed; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the tests and plans for extending them nationwide.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General (1) how many staff are employed in *(a)* unemployment benefit offices, *(b)* jobcentres, *(c)* Manpower Services Commission and *(d)* the remainder of his Department; and how many separate buildings are occupied for each;

(2) how many staff are employed in all aspects of paying unemployment benefit and dealing with tribunals and fraud; and how many separate premises they occupy.

Mr. Lee: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Self-Employed Persons

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will provide for each year, since 1979 and for each region, Scotland and Wales the revised numbers of self-employed; and if he will state, for each figure, the variation from his previously published estimates.

Mr. Lee: The available estimates of the numbers of self-employed in each region, Scotland and Wales between 1979 and 1984 may be found on page 40 of "Historical Supplement No. 1" published with the February issue of *Employment Gazette*.

These estimates have not been revised. Following the 1986 labour force survey the estimates for 1985 have been revised, and they are given in the following table, which shows the variation between the revised figures and those previously published, together with the latest estimates for 1986.

Self-Employed: Regional Analysis

	June each year		*Thousand*
	1985	*Variations from previous estimate*	*1986*
South East	903	0	904
East Anglia	114	+1	105
South West	251	−1	256
West Midlands	185	0	187
East Midlands	157	0	167
Yorkshire and Humberside	222	−1	216
North West	267	0	267
North	104	−1	105
Wales	146	0	154
Scotland	200	+8	205

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fixed Assets (Domestic Investment)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing net domestic investment in fixed assets in manufacturing industry in 1986 to the latest available date together with the corresponding figures for each of the years 1970 to 1986 at actual and at 1986 prices.

Mr. Butcher: Figures of net domestic fixed capital formation in manufacturing industry in 1986 are not yet available. The following table provides for the years 1970 to 1985 at both current and 1980 prices.

Net domestic fixed capital formation in manufacturing industry (excluding assets leased to manufacturers from the financial industries)

Year	Current prices £ million	1980 prices £ million
1970	901	3,395
1971	727	2,496
1972	434	1,377
1973	597	1,675
1974	892	2,132
1975	687	1,304
1976	541	851
1977	734	1,001
1978	1,033	1,291
1979	1,243	1,399
1980	237	237
1981	−1,536	−1,447
1982	−1,822	−1,629
1983	−1,810	−1,562
1984	−675	−595
1985	−651	−524

Source: Central Statistical Office and CSO Blue Book.

Steel Production

Sir John Osborn asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the outcome of the recent European Economic Community Ministers meeting on steel production; and what will be its impact on the level of production of the British steel industry in general, and more specifically the special steel industry of Sheffield.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 23 March at column 23. I would expect additional steel closures in continental Europe, if achieved, to benefit the United Kingdom steel industry as a whole, including firms in Sheffield.

Companies Houses

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the practice of Companies house, Cardiff when replying to letters written to them in the Welsh language, with regard to the use of the Welsh language.

Mr. Howard: The practice of the companies registration office is to respond in the Welsh language to any letters sent to it in that language.

Austin Rover

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what instructions have been given since 1983 to the management of Austin Rover to reveal the production costs of its models to the Ford Motor Company; to what extent the information revealed included the production costs of the Metro; what was the classification status of this information; what promises Ford gave on the use of this information; and what monitoring was carried out by his Department to ensure that Ford kept these promises.

Mr. Channon: In December 1985 Ford and the Rover Group board agreed to open exploratory talks about a possible merger of Ford and Austin Rover, and to exchange information about the two businesses on a reciprocal basis under a commercial confidentiality agreement. My Department was kept informed in broad terms of progress in these talks but the terms of the confidentiality agreement, its implementation, and the information exchanged under it, were a matter for the commercial parties. These exploratory talks were brought to an end in February 1986.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Raw Material Imports

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he is having towards the development of European-wide trade policies to prevent imports of raw materials which could be processed domestically in the countries of origin.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government consider it to be in the general interest of consumers and producers alike that trade in raw materials should be conducted on a free and open basis, which allows comparative advantage to determine the development of domestic processing industries. We do, however, have regular discussions with our European Community partners on measures to encourage viable domestic processing of raw materials in developing countries, for example through the Community's generalised scheme of preferences.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what steps he is taking to improve the marketing conditions under which manufactured and sustainably produced tropical wood products can compete in Europe; and if he has any plans to extend the STABEX scheme to products such as plywood and joinery, or other such measures;

(2) what discussions he is having with partners in the European Economic Community towards the implementation of a code of conduct for importers of semi-processed and processed products including sawn wood, non-assembly joinery and panels, with a view to requiring importers to import only from those producing countries.

which can guarantee that their raw material comes from sustainable and ecologically managed forestry concessions and other such requirements to encourage the production of tropical timber products on a sustainable and renewable basis;

(3) what discussions he is having with partners in the European Economic Community concerning changing existing trading policies in order to encourage the production of tropical timber products on a sustainable and renewable basis; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will make a statement on his involvement in, and the resources contributed to, the International Tropical Timber Organisation.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom has ratified the international tropical timber agreement of which the International Tropical Timber Organisation is the executive arm. The Department was represented at the first meeting (following the appointment of an executive director of ITTO), of the International Tropical Timber Council and has made its due contributions to the organisation.

Some of the ITTA's objectives are:

(1) to encourage members to support and develop industrial tropical timber reforestation and forest management activities.

(2) to encourage the development of national policies aimed at sustainable utilisation and conservation of tropical forests

(3) to encourage increased and further processing of tropical timber in producing countries

(4) to improve marketing and distribution of tropical timber exports of producing members.

Other European Community member states, the United States and Japan are also signatories to ITTO, as are the majority of tropical timber producing countries.

Her Majesty's Government believe the ITTO offers the best forum to address the Government's concern over the depletion of tropical forest resources. They will work with other signatories to the ITTA, and particularly EC member states, to achieve the aims of the agreement.

The STABEX scheme comes under the Lomé convention and covers primary processed timber. There are no plans to extend this to tropical timber products such as plywood.

Securities and Investments Board (Draft Rules)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to refer the draft rules of the Securities and Investments Board to the European Commission for clearance against anti-competition condemnation, pursuant to articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Howard: There is no requirement under the competition rules of the treaty to refer these proposed rules to the Commission for clearance. Nonetheless, copies of the rules have been sent to the Commission for information.

Mr. James Towler

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry why Mr. James Towler was not reappointed to the chair of the North East Transport Users Consultative Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It is my Department's policy to maintain a steady turnover of appointments in the nationalised industry consumer councils in order to widen the opportunities for interested individuals to make a contribution. Appointments are for a single fixed term, although people are often offered further terms. Mr. Towler has served for longer than most. He has served on the committees for nearly 14 years and is about to complete this third term as chairman. My noble Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has made clear to Mr. Towler the Government's gratitude for all he has done on behalf of rail users in the region.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will appoint Mr. James Towler as an independent member of the central Transport Users Consultative Committee.

Mr. Howard: No.

Transport Users Consultative Committees

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people have been reappointed to the chairs of transport users consultative committees; and how many chairs of such committees are currently vacant.

Mr. Howard: The current chairmen of six of the Committees have served for more than one term. The remaining two are on their first appointment. None of the current chairmen has served for more than three terms. None of the chairs are vacant.

Ozone Depletion

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answers of 2 March and 24 March, on what currently available information the Government base the scale of Britain's contribution to ozone depletion and the consequent effect of a freeze or reduction in the production and use of chlorofluorocarbons or other agents responsible for the phenomenon.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Depletion of the ozone layer is a global problem and cannot be attributed to individual countries. It is not possible to quantify the effect of a single country taking precautionary measures to limit omissions of potential ozone depleting substances.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 24 March, on what basis he judged the information requested about the market share of chlorofluorocarbons to be commercially confidential.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There are only two United Kingdom producers of chlorofluorocarbons. If the United Kingdom share of the European market was revealed either company would then be able to calculate the other's market share.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 24 March, if he will now make it his policy to ensure that British manufacturers pursue the development of alternatives to fully halogenated chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 26 March 1987, at column *243*. It is for industry to decide the extent to which it pursues the development of alternatives.

Manufacturing Industry (Fixed Capital Formation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year from 1957 gross and net domestic fixed capital formation by manufacturing industry at current and at 1980 prices.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Manufacturing Industry (Plant and Machinery Investment)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which years since 1957 gross fixed investment in plant and machinery in manufacturing industry in real terms has exceeded the 1979 level; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing on the basis of 1979 = 100 the amount of real investment in plant and machinery in each year since 1957 by manufacturing industry.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the increase in the real rate of exchange against the principal currencies since the date on which the nominal rate for sterling fell to its lowest point against the deutschmark, together with his estimate of the increase in United Kingdom, German, American and Japanese export prices in dollar terms since the fourth quarter of 1976, having regard to changes in the nominal exchange rate and rates of inflation since the quarter for which the figures were last published in the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics".

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *297*]: Information for calculating real exchange rates in terms of relative export prices is not yet available beyond the third quarter of 1986; the daily closing of sterling/deutschmark exchange rate continued to decline to the end of January 1987.

Changes in export prices, exchange rates and rates of inflation since the fourth quarter of 1976 are in the following table:

Changes in prices and exchange rates (since fourth quarter 1976)

	United Kingdom	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*United States of America*	*Japan*
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
Export unit value indices[1] (dollar terms)	+94	+54	+79	+70
Nominal exchange rates[2] (currencies per dollar)	+15½	−16½	[3]	−45½
Consumer prices[2]	+136	+39	+90	+40

[1] To 1986 (third quarter).
[2] To 1986 (fourth quarter).
[3] Not applicable.
Sources: Department of Trade and Industry and International Sources.

Hereford Bye Street Gate Sculptures

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set out in the *Official Report* the evidence which has been submitted to the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art to sustain the claim that the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures have been exported and re-imported to the United Kingdom in the last 50 years.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *298*]: No such evidence was submitted to the reviewing committee. A report of the committee's consideration in March 1986 is to be found on page 26 of the thirty second report of the reviewing committee (CM44) presented to Parliament by the Minister for the Arts in December 1986.

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to identify the intending purchasers of objects which are the subject of consideration by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *298*]: No.

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he was first advised of the sale of the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures; what has been the reason for the length of time which has elapsed since *(a)* for the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art to make a recommendation and *(b)* for him to reach a decision; and when he now expects to make his decision.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *298*]: My Department was advised of the association of the statues with Bye Street Gate of the city of Hereford in February 1986, some time after their sale to their present owner, when it was recommended that the views of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art should be sought. The reviewing committee considered the matter on 18 March 1986 and its recommendation to my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts, was announced in a press notice issued by the Office of Arts and Libraries on 21 March 1986. We have sought to ensure that those concerned have had proper opportunity to put forward

their views for consideration before a decision is made. The Secretary of State will be making his decision as soon as possible.

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures are still located in the United Kingdom;

(2) if any export licence has been granted in respect of the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. 298]: The objects are subject to export control. No licence for their export from the United Kingdom has been granted.

ENERGY

Pressurised Water Nuclear Reactors

1. **Mr. George Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has discussed with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board plans for the construction of additional pressurised water nuclear reactors.

Mr. Peter Walker: The board has indicated that it wishes to submit further applications for PWR stations in due course, but I have as yet received no such applications.

Nuclear Power Projects

10. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has had concerning public expenditure on the promotion of nuclear power projects.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad: My right hon. Friend and I have received many representations about the importance of informing the public of the facts about the safety of nuclear power and its economic and strategic benefits.

Closed Collieries

17. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is satisfied that the procedure for registration of interests in closed collieries allows adequate opportunity for applications by miners to take over the pits in which they have worked; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: This is a management matter for British Coal. I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

British Coal

18. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what was discussed.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the chairman of the British Coal Corporation to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

27. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet Sir Robert Haslam, chairman of British Coal, to discuss future energy needs in the light of the Layfield report.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Combined Heat and Power Schemes

19. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will report on any new developments with combined heat and power with particular reference to the Leicester Energy Ltd. consortium.

Mr. David Hunt: Members of the Leicester CHP consortium have now agreed to support the formation of a heat utility company to take the Leicester project through to the next stage.

Coal Industry (Report)

20. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to respond in more detail to the Energy Committee's report on the coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

38. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to reply in detail to the main recommendations of the Energy Committee's report on the coal industry.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government are giving careful consideration to the Select Committee's report on the coal industry, and I hope that it will be possible to respond shortly.

Coal-fired Power Stations

21. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the ordering of coal-fired power stations.

30. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss new coal-fired capacity.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman to my earlier answer today to the hon. Members for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes).

Conservation Savings

22. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the maximum saving of electricity his Department estimates could be achieved from an investment of £1,500 million over five years in energy conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not possible to estimate the impact such expenditure on energy efficiency would have on electricity saving. Cost-effective energy efficiency measures promoted by the Government have an across-the-board impact on all fuels.

Home Insulation

23. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the additional resources which would be required to ensure that the backlog of inadequately insulated homes occupied by households on low incomes would be properly insulated over the next five years.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 1 December 1986 at column *455-56*.

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many houses have been insulated since 1979 with assistance under Government schemes.

Mr. David Hunt: Since 1979 approximately 3 million households in Great Britain have received grants for loft insulation under the homes insulation scheme, and since my Department began its programme of support for community insulation projects in 1981, this movement has insulated 300,000 homes of low income households.

Tidal Power

24. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans further to increase funding for research and development of tidal power.

Mr. David Hunt: Tidal energy is one of the United Kingdom's most promising renewable energy resources and my right hon. Friend has announced an enlarged £5·5 million programme of research and development on tidal power which is aimed at reducing uncertainty on costs, performance, and regional and environmental issues.

Sizewell B

25. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the public reaction to his announcement of 13 March approving the Sizewell B project.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is clear that the detailed and thorough work undertaken by Sir Frank Layfield has been widely recognised.

Refuse-Generated Methane

26. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what financial support is being provided by his Department for the development of refuse-generated methane as an energy source.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has committed nearly £2 million towards the cost of a number of projects for the development and exploitation of land-fill gas as an energy source, the total cost of which is just over £5·5 million. Of this support, some £700,000 is for research and development work and nearly £1·25 million is for demonstration projects under the energy efficiency demonstration scheme.

Wind Power Generation

28. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is considering any amendments to the Energy Act 1983 to encourage the private generation of electricity by wind power.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The Energy Act 1983 has already put in place a framework designed to facilitate the development of economic private generation, whether from renewable or other sources.

35. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received seeking increased finance for research and development of wind power.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received from the British Wind Energy Association a copy of its position paper "Wind Power for the UK" which, inter alia, calls for increased expenditure on research and development in wind energy. My Department regards wind power as one of the most promising alternative energies and has spent some £20 million since 1979 on R&D into the harnessing of wind power. Our current annual spend is around £4 million. I have invited the BWEA to discuss its paper with my officials.

Nuclear Power (Promotion)

29. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the expenditure of public funds on the promotion of nuclear power.

39. **Mr Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received concerning the expenditure by Her Majesty's Government on the promoting of nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received many representations about the importance of informing the public of the facts about the safety of nuclear power and its economic and strategic benefits.

Coal Industry Dispute

31. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about latest progress with the inquiry by British Coal into outstanding cases of sacked miners arising from the recent strike.

37. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has been informed by the chairman of British Coal of the result of his review of the cases of dismissed miners.

Mr. David Hunt: I understand that an announcement will shortly be made regarding the corporation's review of all outstanding cases of dismissed miners.

Coal-firing Scheme

32. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the future of the coal-firing scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has received five formal representations in respect of the future of the coal-firing scheme.

Nuclear Power Stations

33. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from business and industry about orders for nuclear power stations.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received a number of representations from the power station construction industry about the need for home orders. The Sizewell PWR will provide welcome business for the industry.

Nuclear Power Capacity

34. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the impact of his decision to expand nuclear power capacity on the balance of fuel consumption in the United Kingdom for the next 10 to 20 years.

Mr. Goodlad: Sir Frank Layfield noted the importance of diversity of fuel supply in his report on the Sizewell B inquiry. During the 1990s much of the United Kingdom's

magnox capacity is likely to reach the end of its useful life. The construction of Sizewell B will help to offset this prospective loss in nuclear-generating capacity.

Renewable Energy Sources

36. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to propose fresh United Kingdom or European Community research into renewable sources of energy.

Mr. David Hunt: A substantial number of new projects are continually being established as part of my Department's research, development and demonstration programmes into renewable sources of energy. Over 200 projects are currently active with over 80 new projects started each year. Many of these are supported by the European Community as part of its R, D and D programmes. The United Kingdom plays a full and active part in formulating Community programmes and will continue to propose new projects for support where this is appropriate.

Nuclear Generation (Manpower)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) pursuant to his answer of 24 November 1986, *Official Report*, column *16*, if he will specify the types of jobs assumed in his calculation of the number of jobs indirectly dependent on the nuclear industry; and if he will estimate the number of jobs in each category;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *16*, if he will specify the assumptions made in his estimate for the number of jobs indirectly dependent on the generation of nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: The total number of jobs dependent on the nuclear industry is estimated at around 150,000. The number of jobs indirectly dependent on the nuclear industry is estimated at over 100,000. This is made up of jobs in many sectors, including the construction, heavy plant manufacture, component supply and service sectors. There are also many jobs in other sectors which are not connected directly with the industry but depend on those that are.

Electricity Costs

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last discussed the likely cost of electricity from a newly constructed coal-fired power station with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Closed Power Stations

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how many closed power stations sites remain in the ownership of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and how many cleared power stations it retains.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board that it has 31 closed power stations, of which four are being retained by the board against possible future requirements and the remaining 27 are in the course of disposal. Of the latter, 13 have been cleared or are in an advanced stage of demolition.

Monergy Campaign

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the savings so far achieved by the Monergy campaign in terms of estimated energy use forgone.

Mr. David Hunt: The Monergy campaign has been highly successful in pursuing its aim of promoting the cost-effective improvements in the efficiency with which energy is used. Amongst the substantial energy savings which have been made and will continue to be made in the future, savings of over £250 million a year have been identified since the start of the Government's schemes through energy survey grants and over £100 million a year is currently being saved as a direct result of the energy efficiency demonstration scheme. There has been a substantial increase in monitoring and targeting systems and they are now in place in 200 energy-consuming sites. During Energy Efficiency Year 1986, there was an increase of 70 per cent. over the previous year in homes insulated under the community programme. More than 100,000 homes were so insulated during the year.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will assess the impact of the Budget proposals upon North sea oil and oil-related construction activity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The Budget measures should enable the industry to bring forward new developments and to provide additional orders for the oil-related construction sector.

Public Companies and Undertakings (Statistics)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list all the partially or wholly owned subsidiaries of British Nuclear Fules plc, the Central Electricity Generating Board, the Electricity Council, FASTEC, the National Nuclear Corporation, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, URENCO Ltd (UK), the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electricity Board; whether he

will list those consortia in which the above companies have shares together with the percentage of that shareholding; whether he will list those companies in which the subsidiaries and consortia of the above companies hold shares; whether he will state the scope of his responsibility for the commercial activities of the above companies in respect of shares which they may wish to acquire in other businesses; and whether any other Government Departments are involved.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 March 1987, c. *314-316*]: My earlier reply included details of the holdings of the CEGB and the SSEB in the Electricity Producers' Insurance Co. Ltd. I am advised that there is an additional similar company—NIRA Ltd—in which those bodies have interests of 31·5 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively. I apologise for any inconvenience caused by its omission.

TRANSPORT

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Moore: I have no plans to do so. In the period 1 October 1985 to 1 March 1987, 28 per cent. of new entrants to my Department did not complete an ethnic monitoring questionnaire or gave an invalid response.

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements exist within his Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisation, for dealing with his responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Mr. Moore: Many aspects of my responsibilities affect Greter London to some degree. In particular, my Department's Greater London regional office has responsibilities for construction and maintenance of trunk roads, transport supplementary grant for local roads, the Woolwich ferry, the traffic signal system, and traffic management on the designated road network. Staff in post number 170.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Transport with which Departments and non-departmental bodies his Department and its related non-departmental public bodies has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Moore: My Department consults as appropriate other Departments and non-departmental public bodies on matters relating to services in London. No central record is kept of these numerous oral and written consultations.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Mr. Moore: I have no proposals to change the current arrangements in respect of the responsibilities of my Department's Greater London regional office.

Woolwich Free Ferry

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recommendations he has received concerning the operation of the Woolwich free ferry; and what consultations he intends to initiate with the London boroughs of Greenwich and Newham and bodies representing users of the ferry.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The consultants have completed their interim report. They and we have been waiting for the views of the London borough of Greenwich, which is our agent for the operation of the ferry. The consultants will then make final recommendations.

Coaches (Intimidatory Driving)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps he intends to take to outlaw intimidatory driving by coaches.

Mr. David Mitchell: Additional legislation is not the answer to that small minority of coach drivers who act as my hon. Friend suggests. If he has examples, he should pass them on to the police or to there appropriate chairman of traffic commissioners, who have adequate powers to deal with intimidatory driving. The Department will shortly be consulting on proposed regulations requiring the fitting of speed governors to coaches.

National Bus Company (Subsidiaries)

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that National Bus Company sales programme will not lead to land redevelopment for non-transport purposes.

Mr. David Mitchell: In accordance with its statutory duties, the National Bus Company seeks to sell its local bus operating subsidiaries to parties who will continue to operate bus services. My right hon. Friend sees no reason to seek to prevent redevelopment of land owned by privatised bus companies, as more efficient use of assets in this way will often be a part of the companies' plans for the successful continuation of their bus operations. Where a property has a potentially high alternative use value, the National Bus Company is imposing a mortgage charge to secure for the taxpayer a substantial share of future development gain.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport what former National Bus Company subsidiaries have been privatised; what form of privatisation took place and on what terms in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The following National Bus Company subsidiaries have so far been bought out by their own managements:

Badgerline Ltd.
Cambus Ltd.
Cheltenham and Gloucester Omnibus Company Ltd.
The City of Oxford Motor Services Ltd.

Devon General Ltd.
Eastern Counties Omnibus Ltd.
East Kent Road Car Company Ltd.
The Eastern National Omnibus Company Ltd.
East Yorkshire Motor Services Ltd.
The Maidstone and District Motor Services Ltd.
Midland Red Coaches Ltd.
Midland Red West Ltd.
Potteries Motor Traction Company Ltd.
The Southern Vectis Omnibus Company Ltd.
South Midland Ltd.
Trent Motor Traction Company Ltd.
West Riding Automobile Company Ltd.
The Yorkshire Traction Company Ltd.

The following subsidiaries have been sold to third parties:

Purchaser	*Subsidiary*
Frontsource Ltd.	Alder Valley Engineering Ltd. Bristol Engineering Ltd. Carlyle Works Ltd. Eastern National Engineering Ltd. H & D Distribution Ltd. Kent Engineering (NBC) Ltd. Southdown Engineering Services Ltd. United Counties Engineering Ltd.
Pleasurama Group ATL (Holdings) Ltd.	National Holiday Ltd. NTE Coaches Ltd.

The terms of individual sales are commercially confidential.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the West Riding Group, West Riding Auto and Yorkshire Woollens, former subsidiaries of the National Bus Company, were privatised; to whom the West Riding Group was sold; what was the valuation of its assets at the time of sale; and what was the valuation of assets given in the last accounts published for the West Riding Group as a National Bus Company subsidiary;

(2) when the National Travel East Coaching Unit, Sheffield, a former subsidiary of the National Bus Company, was privatised; to whom the unit was sold; what was the valuation of its assets at the time of sale; and what was the valuation of assets given in the last accounts published for the unit as a National Bus Company subsidiary;

(3) when Yorkshire Traction, a former National Bus Company subsidiary, was privatised; to whom Yorkshire Traction was sold; what was the valuation of assets at the time Yorkshire Traction was sold; and what was the valuation of assets given in the last accounts published for Yorkshire Traction as a National Bus Company subsidiary.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information is as follows:

Company	*Purchaser*	*Total net assets at 31 December 1985*[2] *£000*
West Riding Automobile Company Ltd. (including Yorkshire Woollens)	Management team	[1]£10,947
NTE Coaches Ltd.	ATL (Holdings) Ltd.	
The Yorkshire Traction Company Ltd.	Management team	£2,992

[1] These businesses operated as one NBC company but were sold as separate subsidiaries.
[2] Excluding amounts due from National Bus Company.

Asset valuations at the time of sale are, like other details of the disposals, commercially confidential.

British Transport Advertising

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the sale of the British Transport Advertising division by British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since January, we have received several representations from, or on behalf of, companies excluded from the railways board's invitation to submit bids for British Transport Advertising. The board has now invited those companies, and several others, to submit bids.

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines he has given to the British Railways Board in ensuring that the sale of the British Transport Advertising division will enhance competition in the outdoor advertising market.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines he has given to the British Railways Board in ensuring that the sale of British Transport Advertising division will not have an immediate effect on jobs within the division.

Mr. David Mitchell: None. The British Railways Board is seeking bids for British Transport Advertising as a going concern.

A1-M1 Link

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimate has been made of the number of vehicles that will divert to the A1-M1 link daily once it is completed;

(2) what is his Department's current estimate of the number of heavy goods vehicles which will use the A1-M1 link daily when it is completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic flows on the M1-A1 link road are predicted to be in the following ranges:

	Vehicles per day (thousands) *All vehicles*	*Heavy goods vehicles*
M1-M6 to Rothwell	12-17	3-4
Rothwell to Kettering	27-32	4-5
Kettering Southern Bypass	20-25	3-5
Kettering to Thrapston	12-17	2-4
Thrapston to A1	12-18	3-4
A1 to A14 (A604)	19-25	4-5

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date his Department originally announced the alternative routes for the A1-M1 link in Northamptonshire.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Public comment was invited on four alternative route corridors in October 1974. The preferred route was announced in August 1975.

Instrument Flight Rules

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport under what circumstances, at night, the pilot of an aircraft engaged on an instrument flight rules flight is

permitted to accept, from the air traffic control unit at his destination, responsibility for his own separation from other aircraft as a result of cancelling his instrument flight rules plan during his approach to land.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The rules under which aircraft flying within the United Kingdom airspace may fly are laid down in the Rules of the Air and Air Traffic Control Regulations 1985.

Rule 17(1)*(a)* states that:

"Notwithstanding that the flight is being made with air traffic control clearance it shall remain the duty of the commander of an aircraft to take all possible measures to ensure that his aircraft does not collide with any other aircraft".

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Moore: I will answer these questions shortly.

Freightliner

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column 38, if he will list the volume of freight, revenue and staff employed by Freightliner, for each of the five years prior to 1981; and if he will list the operating costs of Freightliner for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Moore: The information, which is published in Freightliner's annual report and accounts, is as follows:

	Volume of freight carried (TEUs)[1] *000s*	*Revenue* £ *million*	*Staff employed at year's end*
1976	874	39·2	2,349
1977	870	46·1	2,418
1978	843	50·9	2,423
1979	871	60·3	2,522
1980	866	68·9	2,432

[1] Containers forwarded by land in 20 foot equivalent units (TEUs).

	Operating costs £ *million*
1976	37·9
1977	44·7
1978	49·3
1979	58·3
1980	67·6
1981	71·1
1982	74·0
1983	96·1
1984-85	100·1
1985-86	106·9

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the sites of and numbers of Freightliner terminals, open in May 1979 and currently.

Mr. Moore: There were 39 Freightliner terminals open in May 1979, listed as follows:

Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Coatbridge, Linwood, Greenock, Newcastle, Stockton, Leeds, Hull, Longsight, Trafford Park, Barton Dock Road, Garston, Aintree, Holyhead, Nottingham, Dudley, Birmingham, Coventry, Swansea, Cardiff, Stewartby, Ipswich, Felixstowe, Harwich, Tilbury, Barking, Stratford, Willesden, Kings Cross, Bristol, Southampton Maritime, Milbrook, Poole, Plymouth, Belfast, Dublin.

There are 33 Freightliner terminals open at present, listed as follows:

Aberdeen*, Dundee*, Edinburgh*, Glasgow, Coatbridge, Newcastle*, Stockton, Leeds, Hull*, Longsight*, Trafford Park, Barton Dock Road, Garston, Seaforth, Holyhead, Nottingham*, Birmingham, Swansea*, Cardiff, Ipswich, Felixstowe, Tilbury, Barking, Stratford, Dagenham Storage, Willesden, Bristol, Swindon, Southampton Maritime, Milbrook, Belfast, Dublin, Zeebrugge.

*The terminals marked with an asterisk are to close on 6 April.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* all the official guidance provided by his Department to British Rail on the operation of Freightliner since 1979.

Mr. Moore: Guidance on the operation of the Freightliner business is included in the letter of 21 October 1986 to the chairman of the BRB setting objectives. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Section 8 Grants

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of section 8 grant applications refused by his Department in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Moore: In the last 10 years, only two formal applications for section 8 grants have been refused: in 1985 and in 1986.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a list of all existing private sidings, which have been, or are, fully or partly, funded by his Department using section 8 grants, categorising such sidings according to geographical region.

Mr. Moore: The information is as follows. At a number of the locations, more than one grant has been awarded.

In a few cases, grant may have been for handling equipment only, but this could be verified at disproportionate cost. The projects marked [1] are where grant was for wagons only.

North

ICI (Agricultural Division), Billingham, Cleveland[1]
Steetley Minerals, Hartlepool, Cleveland[1]
Associated British Maltsers Ltd, Berwick on Tweed
Blue Circle Industries PLC, Weardale, Co Durham
W & M Thompson (Quarries) Ltd, Ferryhill, Co Durham
Cobra Railfreight Ltd, Middlesbrough, Cleveland
Ribblesdale Cement Ltd, Gateshead
Ribblesdale Cement Ltd, Middlesbrough

Yorkshire & Humberside

J McIntyre Ltd, Bradford
BSC—Tinsley Park and Shepcote Lane, Sheffield
D & F Steel Ltd, Stourton, Leeds
British Coal, Kinsley New Mine, Nr Wakefield
Immingham Rail Freight Terminal, Stallingborough,

Humberside
Rockware Glass, Doncaster and Knottingley
Redfearn Glass, Barnsley
Renault (UK) Ltd, Goole

North West
Containerbase Ltd, Aintree, Liverpool
Robert Smith & Son Ltd, Birkenhead
Shell Chemicals (UK), Manchester
Ribblesdale Cement, Clitheroe, Lancs
Blue Circle Cement, Upperby, Carlisle
P & G Fogarty, Blackburn, Lancs
UKF Fertilisers (Shellstar) Ltd, Ince, Merseyside[1]
Mersey Docks & Harbour Company, Royal Seaforth Dock, Liverpool
Tarmac Roadstone Ltd, Agecroft (Manchester) & Widnes
British Transport Docks Board (now ABP), Garston, Merseyside
ICI, Winsford, Cheshire
A S Williams (Holdings) Ltd, Preston, Lancs
Duncan Transrail Ltd, Salford
BSC Track Products Division, Workington, Cumbria
Carlisle Warehousing Ltd
Tube Investments, Chesterfield, Derbys
Redland Roadstone Ltd, Mountsorrel, Leics
British Coal, Shireoaks, Notts
National Smokeless Fuels, Avenue Coking Works, Chesterfield
Blue Circle Cement, Hope, Derbys
Bardon Hill Quarries Ltd, Bardon, Leics
ECC Quarries Ltd, Croft, Leics
Ketton Cement Ltd, Ketton, Leics
Pedigree Pet Foods, Melton Mowbray, Leics
Tarmac Roadstone Ltd, Topley Pike, Derbys

West Midlands
British Leyland, Longbridge
Railhead Services, Birmingham
Midlands Electricity Board, Hereford
Albright and Wilson, Oldbury, Birmingham
ECC-Tiger Rail, Stoke on Trent
Midlands Electricity Board, Fort Dunlop
National Smokeless Fuels, Coventry Homefire Works
Round Oak Terminal Ltd., Brierley Hill
Hereford Storage Ltd., Allscott, Salop
Allen Rowland and Co. Ltd., Tyseley, Birmingham
RMC (UK) Ltd., Washwood Heath, Birmingham

East Anglia
Dower Wood and Co. Ltd., Newmarket, Cambridgeshire
Sidney Banks and Co. Ltd., Kennett, Cambridgeshire
Ipswich Port Authority
A. King and Sons Ltd., Newmarket, Cambridgeshire
Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company
Tilbury Roadstone Ltd., Barham, Suffolk
Ciba-Geigy, Duxford, Cambridgeshire
Redland Aggregates Ltd., Trowse, Norfolk
Redland Aggregates Ltd., Tallington, Lincolnshire
Redland Roadstone Ltd., Higham, Suffolk
British Industrial Sand Ltd., King's Lynn
Rugby Portland Cement, Barrington, Cambridgeshire
GC Papworth Ltd., Ely
Rugby Portland Cement, Norwich
Craske Ltd., Lowestoft, Norfolk
Richard Johnston, Snetterton, Norfolk

South East
Sheerness Steel, Kent
Alexander Bruce, Grays, Essex
British Coal, Tilmanstone, Kent
Tarmac Roadstone, Hothfield, Ashford, Kent
T. W. Ward, Colombia Wharf, Grays, Essex
Tunnel Cement Ltd., Pitstone, Buckinghamshire
Foster Yeoman Ltd., Eastleigh, Hampshire
Foster Yeoman Ltd., Theale, Berkshire
H. Young Transport, Eastleigh, Hampshire
Shipbreaking (Queensborough) Ltd., Isle of Sheppey
Redland Aggregates Ltd., Sevenoaks, Kent
Redland Aggregates Ltd., Elstow, Bedfordshire
Redland Roadstone Ltd., Radlett, Hertfordshire
Southern Depot Company, Letchworth, Hertfordshire
Powell Duffryn Fuels Ltd., Hove, Sussex
Powell Duffryn Fuels Ltd., Ashford, Kent
Cowley Rail Terminal, Cowley, Oxford
T. P. Dibdin Ltd., Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire
RMC (UK) Ltd., Crawley, Sussex
R. Taylor and Sons, Becket Street, Oxford

South West
E. Pearse and Co., Exeter, Devon
E. Pearse and Co., Barnstaple, Devon
Pioneer Concrete (UK) Ltd., Gloucestershire
Foster Yeoman Ltd., Merehead, Somerset
English China Clays, Heathfield, Newton Abbot, Devon
R. H. Roadstone Ltd., Frome, Somerset
ARC Ltd., Frome, Somerset
Taunton Cider Ltd., Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset

Greater London
Freightliners Ltd., Stratford
Tarmac Roadstone Ltd., Hayes, Middlesex
Railstore Ltd., Gidea Park, Romford
Arthur Guinness Son and Co., Park Royal
Dagenham Storage Co. Ltd., Dagenham
Marcon (RMC) Ltd., Park Royal
Barking Rail Handling Services Ltd., Barking
Bulk Fuels, Bow
Tarmac Roadstone, Mile End
George Cohen Ltd., Willesden

Non-geographical
Traffic Services Ltd.[1]
Standard Railfreight Ltd.[1]

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each of the last 10 years, the number of section 8 grants made by his Department, showing in each case, the total value of annual grants, the average value of individual grants in each year, and the highest and lowest individual grant in each of those years.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of grants	*Total value*	*Average value*	*Highest value*	*Lowest value*
1977	12	2,695,000	224,583	535,000	11,000
1978	10	3,734,000	374,000	897,000	17,000
1979	11	3,670,000	367,000	993,000	40,000
1980	11	5,576,000	506,000	1,875,000	65,000
1981	5	3,951,000	790,200	1,620,000	79,000
1982	11	3,214,000	292,181	660,000	39,000
1983	7	4,237,500	605,357	2,521,000	32.000
1984	13	5,157,540	396,734	1,530,000	8,500
1985	17	8,612,068	506,592	3,707,026	8,875
1986	2	1,976,150	988,075	1,7500,000	226,150
1987 to date	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	99	42,832,258	432,649	3,707,026	8,500

The figures exclude grant awards made but not taken up and request only the initial grant award in all cases. Final outturn will be higher when design changes and inflation are taken into account, in nearly all cases.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the numbers of staff working *(a)* solely and *(b)* partly, on the provision and processing of section 8 grants, in 1979, 1983 and currently.

Mr. Moore: The information requested is as follows:

	Solely	*Partly*
1979	3	6
1983	2	7
1987	2	5

Road Accidents

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a detailed list of all research and development projects into ways of reducing road accidents and casualties under way or planned for 1987-88 at the transport and road research laboratory or contracted out to other agencies relating to *(a)* road user behaviour, *(b)* road environment and *(c)* vehicle safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. In view of the volume of information requested, I am writing to the hon. Member and placing copies of the letter in the Library.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if as a means of reducing the under-reporting of road accidents and of improving knowledge of the epidemiology of road accidents, he has any plans to extend linkage of hospital in-patient statistics and STATS 19 data to the rest of Britain.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The transport and road research laboratory is continuing to explore linkage to hospital in-patient data with STATS 19 data with the intention of extending the arrangements already in place in Scotland to Wales and the English regions if this proves to be practicable. There are difficulties in gaining access to the hospital data and in the quality of that data to enable the linkage to be achieved. Problem of gaining access is a medical ethical one.

The quality of data is inferior, in that not all areas use the up-to-date version of the classification of disease (ICD code) on which the linkage depends to identify the type of road user. The computer method of linkage developed for Scottish data is given in LR 1130 and examples of use of the linked data in RR 96.

Car Telephones

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to monitor the use of hand-held car phones, following the advice given in the new edition of the highway code;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to make the use of hand-held car phones whilst driving a specific motoring offence.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Advice on the use of car telephones is in the new edition of the highway code. I have no plans to introduce additional legislation. I prefer to rely on the good sense and responsibility of the vast majority of drivers to put safety first when given clear and sensible advice on how to do so.

It would not be practical to monitor the use of car telephones. We will keep under review any evidence of their implications for road safety.

Steering Wheels

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made in the European Community towards a performance specification for car steering wheels to minimise the risk of facial injury, following published research and development work carried out at the transport and road research laboratory.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A draft standard based on TRRL research is under discussion in the expert group advising the European Commission. We hope that a final standard will be agreed by the end of this year and that the Commission will then propose an appropriate amending directive.

Passenger Accidents

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide information on the relative risk of accident injury for passenger travel in aircraft, rail and long distance coach and minibus services either by miles travelled, trips or on a population basis.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following data are readily available:

Casualty rate per billion passenger kilometres: 1982

	Number
Rail	
Movement accidents[1]	60
Train accidents	7
Bus/Coach	
Motorways	10
Non built-up "A" roads	55
All roads[1]	193
Airline	0·03

[1] Includes boarding and alighting accidents, which are not included in train accidents or motorway accidents and which occur comparatively rarely on non-built-up roads.

The rate for airline passengers is for United Kingdom-registered aircraft operating passenger services. It varies considerably from year to year, the highest figure in recent years being 1·3 in 1985. For minibuses, data on passenger kilometres are not available and accident reports do not distinguish minibuses from motor caravans.

Further information is in "Road Accidents Great Britain 1982" (pages 15 and 16). A copy is in the Library.

Train Timekeeping

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any statistics about the effects on passenger train timekeeping of the reduction of railway lines to single track.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to introduce legislation on, and a nationality test for, the beneficial ownership of fishing vessels registered in the United Kingdom and dependencies as recommended by the working group which reported to him last autumn.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are considering this matter.

Severe Weather

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to prevent a repetition of the disruption caused by severe winter weather earlier in the current year in the south west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During January, heavy snowfall occured in the south-west, particularly in the far south-western tip of Cornwall. The motorway and trunk road network was kept open, with the exception of two stretches of the A30 and A46, each of which was blocked by drifts for about 24 hours.

The Department already has comprehensive arrangements with highway authorities for keeping open national roads during severe weather, and it provides special snowploughs/gritters for use on motorways. These arrangements cannot guarantee that no disruption will occur. They do ensure that any such disruption is limited. The Department is more generally reviewing its arrangements with local authorities to see if any improvements are called for in the light of this winter's experience.

Railways in the south-west are the responsibility of the British Railways Board. I understand that the board has identified a number of measures to deal generally with exceptionally severe weather in the light of its experience during January.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Transport what change in the cost of London Regional Transport services has occurred since the Government assumed responsibility from the Greater London council.

Mr. David Mitchell: The chairman of LRT in 1984 was given the objective of reducing the level of revenue support from ratepayers and taxpayers to £95 million in 1987-88. The last plans to be made by the GLC for London Transport had revenue subsidy rising to £245 million in 1987-88. In fact, the corporation succeeded in reducing revenue support to £97 million in 1985-86, thus almost achieving the objective two years early. The continuing reduction in revenue support this year and next will allow the burden of London's ratepayers to be reduced by £55 million in two years, and at the same time an increase in investment to a record £280 million.

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current level of demand for London Regional Transport underground services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport estimates that 3,880 million passenger miles will be travelled on the underground during 1986-87. The corresponding figure for the last full year during which the GLC controlled London Transport was 2,700 million passenger miles. This year's figure is another all-time record and I congratulate the corporation on its continued success in attracting passengers to use its services.

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Transport what transport services are currently being provided by London Regional Transport for disabled people.

Mr. David Mitchell: In addition to its growing network of wheelchair-accessible mobility buses, LRT has recently announced its decision to adapt the fleet of Airbus vehicles to enable them to carry wheelchair-bound passengers between central London and Heathrow airport. An accessible minibus service to and from the airport is being provided meanwhile, together with a service linking the main line stations. LRT has increased by 20 per cent. the funding available for borough-based dial-a-ride schemes in London, which have a steadily rising membership. It continues to administer the London taxicard scheme on behalf of participating boroughs. LRT is also undertaking a major programme to improve access for elderly and ambulant disabled people to their conventional buses. All these developments show clearly the increasing regard being given to the transport needs of disabled people in London.

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes have been made to concessionary travel arrangements for the elderly and disabled in Greater London since the Government assumed responsibility for London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: All 33 London local authorities have agreed to participate in a voluntary scheme in 1986-87 and 1987-88 which offers free travel for the elderly and disabled on all LRT services except before 9 am on weekdays, as under the former GLC scheme. The London Regional Transport Act 1984 guarantees the continued availability of a free travel scheme in London in the absence of voluntary agreement between the local authorities. This is in stark contrast to the scaremongering which took place when the Government assumed responsibility for London Regional Transport, and before the abolition of the GLC.

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Transport what increase in London Regional Transport fares there has been since the Government assumed responsibility from the Greater London council.

Mr. David Mitchell: LRT fares have been held broadly in line with inflation and below the general movement in wages. The latest fares revision on 11 January 1987 increased fares in real terms by an average of ½ per cent., maintaining real fares broadly at their level following the last fares change by London Transport under GLC control.

Mr. Forman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current level of demand for London Regional Transport bus services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport estimates that 2,700 million passenger miles will be travelled on its bus services during 1986-87. The corresponding figure for the last full year during which the GLC controlled London Transport was 2,440 million passenger miles. This year's figure is the highest since 1978, a particularly praiseworthy achievement when seen against the long-term general decline in demand for bus services in Britain.

DEFENCE

NATO

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the posts, ranks, and responsibilities of the two

representatives from his Department who sit on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's planning board for European inland surface transport.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 20 February 1986 at column *329*.

Radioactive Materials (Transport)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the Oldham alert system for incidents involving the transportation of radioactive weapons materials provides for the county fire officer, the chief emergency planning officer, and county and district chief executives to be notified of a convoy accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: In addition to any action taken by the civil police, who are alerted immediately after an accident involving radioactive material, in accordance with their local incident plans, our contingency plans also cater for the rapid provision of expert advice as required to representatives of local agencies, including those referred to by the hon. Member.

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance is given to Royal Marines escorting radioactive weapons materials convoys in south Yorkshire.

Mr. Stanley: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on the methods used or the procedures applied to the movement of nuclear weapons.

Marconi

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has had any consultations with the Marconi group of companies about the Cosmos computer project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have had no such consultations. Cosmos is a private venture development by Marconi and is therefore that company's concern.

Armed Forces (Brutality)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many letters his Department has received since 1979 concerning allegations of maltreatment or brutality in the armed services.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only with disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men have asked to leave the armed services during the last eight years because of maltreatment or brutality.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally. If a service man indicated that his desire to leave the armed forces was due to maltreatment or brutality the allegations would be fully investigated under the arrangements set out in my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 23 March at column *2*.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many courts martial have been held since 1979 concerning allegations of maltreatment or brutality in the armed forces.

(2) on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has held an internal inquiry concerning maltreatment and brutality in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: I shall reply shortly.

British Military Hospital, Dharan

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what were the full costs of running the British military hospital in Dharan, Nepal, in 1984 and 1985;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of the British military hospital in Dharan, Nepal.

Mr. Freeman: I shall answer shortly.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involves a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall answer shortly.

Low-flying Aircraft

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of flights of low-flying aircraft over the Borders in each of the years since 1983; and how many complaints his Department has received in each of those years.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying administrative areas do not correspond with regional boundaries. Figures for the Borders region are not, therefore, available.

SCOTLAND

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Rifkind: Surveys of the ethnic origins of staff have been carried out in agreement with the Council of Civil Service Unions on the basis of voluntary self-classification. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system; however, the Civil Service and the Council of Civil Service Unions are keen to improve the data base and are discussing practical ways in which this can be done. Information on the response rates in the existing new entrant surveys is not readily available.

Asbestos

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional finance he is granting to *(a)* industry, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* health boards to remove asbestos from their premises.

Mr. Ancram: While my right hon. and learned Friend pays particular regard to any special needs brought to his attention in determining the resources to be made available to local authorites and health boards, and while asbestos removal or treatment may in suitable cases form part of an assisted industrial development scheme, no funds are specifically allocated for work relating to asbestos.

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's estimate of the time it will take to remove the optimum amount of asbestos from premises in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The Department is not in a position to make such an estimate. Authorities and individual businesses are themselves best placed to examine their own building stocks, to identify any problems and to assess the nature and time scale of any necessary asbestos treatment. Guidance issued by the Department emphasises that removal programmes are often neither the best nor the safest course of action to follow.

Cancer

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of deaths in Scotland from each form of cancer, broken down for men and women, for each of the last 10 years up to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John MacKay: The information required is published in table C2.1 of the Registrar General for Scotland's annual reports. A copy for each year can be found in the Library.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Rifkind: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department has taken to promote the use of unleaded petrol in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: As stated by my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Planning in his answer of 23 June 1986 to my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) at column *3*, the Government's immediate aim is the establishment of a network of filling stations supplying unleaded petrol. This should be primarily a matter for the industry but the Government do not rule out the need for other measures should they prove necessary.

Forestry Commission (Land Sales)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if the Forestry Commission has plans to offer for sale any further areas of land in Sutherland and Caithness;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that the Forestry Commission gives conservation organisations first refusal when offering for sale parcels of land in areas of high conservation interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Community Programme Places (Fife)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer of 26 March, if he will provide for 1987-88 for Fife his revised figure for community programme places and state the variation between this figure and his original allocation.

Mr. Lang: Further to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 26 March, the original allocation of community programme places to Fife for 1987-88 totalled 1,710.

Subsequently, the provisional number of places available to Fife was increased by 40 to 1,750.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many persons are waiting in Scotland for *(a)* hip joint operations, *(b)* knee joint operations and *(c)* kidney treatment;

(2) how many persons on the hospital waiting list in Scotland have been waiting for *(a)* more than six months and *(b)* more than a year; and if he will give figures for each year since and including 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Scottish Development Agency (Public Relations)

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why the SDA put out to private PR consultants the arranging of the ceremony of the declaration of continuing commitment to the east end of Glasgow, and what was the total cost of the event.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. 28]: I understand that the agency took this managerial decision because, at the time the requirements for the event were being identified, the agency's public relations department was understaffed owing to unfilled vacancies. The cost to the agency of the event is likely to be in the region of £13,000. I am unable to comment on any costs incurred by other participating bodies.

NORTHERN IRELAND

TBTO Leak (Lough Neagh)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding the TBTO chemical leak into Lough Neagh; what investigations have been made to determine any effects on eels or fish stocks in the lough or on water supplies; and what action the Government are taking in this matter.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

European Year of the Environment

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what plans relating to aspects of Government responsibilities in Northern Ireland have been drawn up with reference to European Year of the Environment.

Mr. Needham: I shall repy to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Needham: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Power Stations (Lignite Supplies)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with British Petroleum Coal about the cost and supply of lignite to power stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The Department of Economic Development is currently examing proposals for the construction of new generating capacity in Northern Ireland, which could be based on lignite, and has a responsibility for licensing the mining of lignite. It is therefore in close contact with the development of plans by British Petroleum Coal to mine lignite and the progress of discussions on price and other terms of supply.

Power Station, Coolkeeragh

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to authorise the construction of a coal-fired power station at Coolkeeragh in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: There are currently no plans to authorise the construction of a coal-fired power station at Coolkeeragh. Consideration is being given to a number of options for new generating capacity which will be required in the mid-1990s. These include coal or dual oil/coal-fired plant at Kilroot, interconnection with Scotland and lignite-fired power station.

Power Stations (Coal Supplies)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with British Coal about the cost and supply of coal to power stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Completion of the Kilroot power station as a coal-fired or dual coal/oil-fired station is one of the options currently being considered for new generating capacity in Northern Ireland. In view of this, my officials are in discussion with the Department of Energy and British Coal on the subject of future coal prices.

Kilroot Power Station

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the conversion of Kilroot phase I to be complete and the power station to be back in service.

Mr. Viggers: It is expected that Kilroot phase I will be recommissioned in mid-1989.

Coal Prices

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assumption he has made of the level of coal prices for the next 30 years, in considering the construction of a new power station in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Completion of the Kilroot power station as a coal-fired or dual coal/oil-fired station is one of the options for future generating capacity in Northern Ireland currently being considered and estimates of coal price movements over the next 30 years will be an important factor in determining the best option. The evaluation will be made on the basis of the best forecasts available to my officials, and the assembly of these forecasts is continuing.

Power Stats (Coal-burning Capacity)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans there are to increase the coal burning capacity of power stations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The Kilroot power station is currently being converted from oil to dual oil/coal firing. In addition further coal and dual oil/coal-fired capacity is being considered in the evaluation of options for new generating capacity required in the mid-1990s.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dairy Inspection

Mr. Best asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *417*, to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn about dairy inspection, if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of the organistions to which the draft guidelines will be sent.

Mr. Gummer: We do not intend to issue draft guidelines on this subject.

Mr. Best asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *417*, to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn about dairy inspection, how he calculated the expected number of routine visits at 20,000 for dairy inspection.

Mr. Gummer: The figure of approximately 20,000 routine visits reflects on the one hand the expected number of registered producers and licence holders and on the other hand the average visiting frequencies given in the last sentence of my previous reply.

Monetary Compensatory Amounts

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply on 16 March, *Official Report*, columns *418-19*, what representations he has made to the Republic of Ireland about delays in the payment of monetary compensatory amounts to Northern Ireland farmers; what representations he has received from people in Northern Ireland about these delays; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am aware of the financial difficulties caused to Northern Ireland traders by the late payment of some United Kingdom MCAs and my officials are currently examining with ROI officials how the situation can be improved. I hope that these discussions will result in payments being made more promptly in future.

Headage Payments

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which countries in the European Economic Community, other than the United Kingdom, do not impose an upper limit for headage payments under any arrangement comparable to the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme.

Mr. Gummer: All EC member states, with the exception of Denmark which has no designated less favoured areas, pay allowances corresponding to the United Kingdom's hill livestock compensatory allowances under national schemes. These payments are governed by EC statutory provisions, which include a maximum permitted payment per hectare and per livestock unit and limits per holding in respect of dairy cows. We understand from the European Commission that Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, the Republic of Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain have opted to apply ceilings per holding in addition to the mandatory limits.

Intervention Stocks

Mrs. Peacock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will detail the locations, type, quantity and approximate value of common agricultural policy intervention stocks held in the constituency of Batley and Spen.

Mr. Gummer: There are no intervention stocks in Batley and Spen.

Cereal Farmers

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average holding of a farmer growing predominantly cereals in the United Kingdom; and how many cereal farmers there are.

Mr. Gummer: At the June 1986 agricultural census ther were 19,600 specialist cereals holdings in the United Kingdom; the average size of these holdings was 102·3 hectares. The total number of all holdings growing cereals was 92,200.

Cereal Production

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures have been taken to curb excess production of cereals in the European Economic Community in 1986.

Mr. Gummer: The changes in the cereals regime agreed at the 1986 price fixing reduced the effective level of support to producers by restricting the availability of intervention, tightening intervention quality standards and introducing a 3 per cent. co-responsibility levy.

Intervention Stocks (Cereals)

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of stocks of cereals held in intervention *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the European Economic Community; and how many months' supply this represents.

Mr. Gummer: Community intervention stocks of cereals were valued on 30 November 1986 at 2,977 million ecu (£1,967 million), including 791 million ecu (£523 million) for stocks in the United Kingdom. These stocks are equivalent to approximately 40 days supply for the Community of 12.

Honey

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he will take to protect British honey producers from unfair competition and the dumping of cheap honey on the domestic market by foreign producers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Imports of honey from third countries are subject to a 27 per cent. duty under the European Community's common external tariff and are subject to the Honey Regulations 1976 which implement directive 74/409/EEC and set health standards for imports. Over the last four years, home production of natural honey has averaged less than 3,000 tonnes annually against consumption of over 20,000 tonnes.

Action on unfair competition and dumping is the responsibility of the European Commission. Where United Kingdom interests are injured, the unfair trade unit of the Department of Trade and Industry works closely with them in ensuring the necessary evidence is presented to the Commission.

Beekeepers

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to assist beekeepers in the United Kingdom by the provision of sugar from European Economic Community stockpiles for winter feed for hives.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. The European Community does not normally hold stockpiles of sugar. A decision on whether or not to introduce a scheme to provide surplus European Community sugar to beekeepers would be primarily a matter for the European Commission. However, previous Community schemes to provide subsidised sugar to beekeepers have not proved cost-effective: they have resulted in little increase in sugar consumption, high unit administrative costs and have not been popular with our beekeepers because of the denaturing of the sugar necessary to prevent abuse.

Food Aid

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many instances have occurred where

supplies of surplus European Economic Community food being made available for free distribution have been found on sale in retail shops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will discuss the distribution arrangments for European Economic Community butter with the voluntary organisations which have been responsible for its distribution in Birmingham.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Members as soon as possible.

Farmers

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of the various measures which he introduced in February 1987 and March 1987 will be of help to small farmers in north Norfolk.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is of course up to individual farmers, whatever their size or location, to decide how to adapt their businesses to the changes ahead as a result of the reform of the CAP. However, the package we announced offers the industry a number of promising new opportunities which individual farmers may wish to consider in the light of their own circumstances. The measures to encourage alternative use of agricultural land and to assist diversification are described in the set of documents published by the Government on 10 March and entitled "Farming and Rural Enterprise". Copies are available from the Vote Office.

Food (Colouring Regulations)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to publish the Food Advisory Committee's report on its "Review of the Colouring Matter in Food Regulations 1973"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The report has been published today and we have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

This report contains some very important recommendations which will require careful consideration. Implementation of a number of the recommendations would require amendment to EC legislation and we will be discussing these with our European partners as appropriate. We consider, however, that three of the recommendations which concern restrictions on the use of colours in food are amenable to early action. Accordingly, we intend shortly to issue proposals for legislation:

(i) to put into regulations the present voluntary agreement with the industry not to use added colours in foods specially prepared for babies and young children with the exception of three colours which are also vitamin sources;

(ii) to remove yellow 2G from the permitted list of colours, and

(iii) to prevent the use of methyl violet for the marking of the rinds of citrus fruits.

We are seeking comments on the committee's other recommendations, in particular the committee's proposals to reduce the levels of use of colours in food by setting maximum levels of use, and will consider further action when we have assessed the comments received.

North Sea Fisheries (Disease Levels)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the numbers of marine vertebrate fish sampled in 1983, 1984 and 1985 with the specific objective of monitoring the disease levels in the populations present in the North Sea; and if he will list the species involved.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *70*]: The numbers and species of fish sampled by the Fisheries Departments with the specific objective of monitoring the disease levels in the populations in the North sea were:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Dabs	984	1,017	1,399
Plaice	63	112	102
Haddock	14,314	6,260	2,155
Cod	506	309	622
	15,867	7,698	4,278

The reduction in the number of haddock examined results from a refinement of the sampling procedures which means that fewer fish are required to achieve the same degree of statistigal accuracy for the diseases under investication.

CIVIL SERVICE

Payroll Giving

95. **Mr. Richard Shepherd** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what plans he has to promote payroll giving within the Management and Personnel Office.

Mr. Luce: We are moving quickly to set up a scheme to cover MPO and other Departments paid through the Chessington payroll centre. The MPO staff journal will shortly publish an article describing the scheme and full details will be sent to every staff member as soon as they are agreed.

Clerical Staff (Qualifications)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will make a statement about the requirement for educational qualifications for clerical staff in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Recruitment of clerical staff is carried out by individual Government Departments. Selection for interview on the basis of educational qualifications is the most commonly used method though selection may also be made by clerical test or clerical experience. The Cabinet Office (MPO) is currently carrying out a review of the entry requirements and selection methods for these grades.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Advice to Ministers)

100. **Mr. Alton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what regulations govern the giving of tax advice to Ministers by civil servants.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There are no special regulations. Ministers have the same rights as other taxpayers to satisfy themselves that their tax affairs are dealt with correctly and in accordance with the law.

Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate of the amount payable this year to overseas residents by way of rent, interest and dividends, respectively, together with the amount liable to tax at the standard rate.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The balance of payments accounts indicate interest and dividends paid to overseas residents in 1986, net of United Kingdom taxes, totalled £39·8 billion. Of this total, £2·8 billion is estimated to have been by way of dividends and the remaining £37 billion in the form of interest. Estimates for 1987 are not available. Separate figures for rent are not available.

Under the imputation system of corporation tax, the shareholders' liability to basic rate income tax on dividends paid by United Kingdom companies is regarded as met by the advance corporation tax payable by the company in respect of the distributions made by it. The amount of interest paid to non-residents and liable to basic rate tax is not known.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table for each year since 1957-58 showing the tax-free income for each of a single person, a single-wage married couple, a two-wage married couple and single-wage couples with each of one, two, three and four children, as a percentage of average male earnings in October each year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Before 1976-77, child support was given through taxable family allowances and child tax allowances. From 1976-77 onwards, the tax allowances and family allowances were phased out and replaced by non-taxable child benefit. In order to allow for this change, the table gives the level of earnings at which net liability to tax arises after deducting child benefit from tax payments. These "break-even points" are given as a percentage of financial year average male manual earnings. I regret that it is not possible to provide the information as a percentage of average earnings in October of each year.

Break-even points as a percentage of average male manual earnings[1]

	Single person	*One earner married couple*					*Two earner married couple*
		Without children	*[2]With one child*	*[3]With two children*	*[4]With three children*	*[5]With four children*	
1957-58	29·4	49·1	68·6	108·5	149·7	190·2	76·6
1958-59	28·9	48·3	67·5	106·6	146·9	186·6	75·2
1959-60	27·4	45·7	63·9	103·5	142·2	181·1	71·2
1960-61	25·5	42·6	59·6	96·5	132·6	168·9	66·4
1961-62	25·4	41·6	57·7	92·6	126·9	161·2	64·2
1962-63	24·6	40·3	55·8	89·6	122·7	155·9	62·1
1963-64	32·7	50·5	67·5	97·1	127·7	161·8	80·1
1964-65	30·3	46·7	62·4	89·8	118·1	149·6	74·1
1965-66	27·8	42·9	57·4	82·9	109·0	138·1	70·7
1966-67	26·8	41·4	55·4	80·0	105·2	133·3	68·2
1967-68	25·5	39·3	52·6	76·0	99·9	128·4	64·8
1968-69	23·7	36·5	48·9	72·8	96·1	118·5	60·2
1969-70	25·4	37·3	48·8	68·0	89·1	109·8	62·7
1970-71	28·7	41·0	51·1	64·4	80·6	98·9	69·7
1971-72	25·8	37·0	49·3	65·0	83·4	103·8	62·8
1972-73	32·1	41·8	52·7	66·4	82·6	100·5	73·9
1973-74	28·0	36·5	45·9	57·6	71·6	87·0	64·5
1974-75	24·4	33·7	43·1	54·1	67·0	80·9	58·1
1975-76	21·4	30·3	37·9	48·4	60·1	72·7	51·6
1976-77	20·6	30·5	38·9	49·9	61·9	74·8	51·1
1977-78	24·4	37·6	46·6	56·9	68·1	80·1	62·0
1978-79	22·0	34·3	48·5	61·0	73·0	85·8	56·4
1979-80	22·2	34·5	50·1	63·3	76·5	89·6	56·7
1980-81	22·7	35·4	47·6	59·8	72·0	84·2	58·1
1981-82	20·6	32·1	44·9	57·6	70·4	83·2	52·6
1982-83	21·8	34·1	47·3	60·5	73·7	86·9	55·9
1983-84	23·1	36·1	49·8	63·4	77·1	90·7	59·2
1984-85	24·1	37·9	51·8	65·6	79·4	93·2	62·1
1985-86	24·8	38·9	52·3	65·8	79·3	92·7	63·7
[6]1986-87	24·4	38·2	51·5	64·8	78·0	91·3	62·7
[6]1987-88	23·8	37·3	51·0	64·7	78·5	92·2	61·1

[1] Financial year average earnings of full time males aged over 21 working a full week.
[2] One child aged under 11.
[3] Two children aged under 11.
[4] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11-15.
[5] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11-15, one aged 16.
[6] Provisional.

Pension Fund Contributions (Tax Relief)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the period before 1979 and each year since, the estimated number and value of single premium type contributions to pension and other funds which

benefit from a measure of tax relief on income and capital gains, together with the estimated cost to the Exchequer in the next financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that this information is not available.

Interest Rates

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the average base interest rates for each quarter of the last even years in the United Kingdom, together with corresponding figures for West Germany, Holland, Austria and Switzerland for the same period.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested for the United Kingdom is set out in the table. I regret that comparable data for base rates are not available for the other countries.

United Kingdom Base Rates[1] from the first quarter of 1980 (in per cent.)

Year	
1980	Q1 17
	Q2 17
	Q3 16
	Q4 15¼
1981	Q1 13½
	Q2 12
	Q3 12¼
	Q4 15¼
1982	Q1 13¼
	Q2 12½
	Q3 11¼
	Q4 9½
1983	Q1 10½
	Q2 10
	Q3 9½
	Q4 9
1984	Q1 9
	Q2 9
	Q3 11
	Q4 10
1985	Q1 13
	Q2 12½
	Q3 11½
	Q4 11½
1986	Q1 12½
	Q2 10½
	Q3 10
	Q4 10½

[1] Figures are quarterly averages.
Source: CSO, "Financial Statistics".

Civil Service Unions

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what details the Civil Service unions have provided him with concerning their latest round of industrial action.

Mr. Brooke: None. Of the six Civil Service unions currently seeking their members' views on the terms of the 1987 pay offer, only one (the SCPS) is recommending industrial action.

Public Expenditure

Sir David Price asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, following his Budget proposals and the Government's expenditure plans for 1987-88, what percentage of the gross domestic product will be represented by public expenditure, taxation and the public sector borrowing requirement, respectively in 1987-88; and how these percentages compare with similar figures for 1978-79.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Inland Revenue Office, Cumbernauld

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the present staffing establishment is for the Inland Revenue office at Cumbernauld, and the projected establishment for each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Inland Revenue (Lawyers)

Mr. Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the complement of lawyers in the Inland Revenue; how many of these posts are unfilled; and what percentage of lawyers in post have been in the Civil Service for five years or more.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Customs and Excise (Lawyers)

Mr. Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the complement of lawyers in the Customs and Excise; how many of these posts are unfilled; and what percentage of lawyers in post have been in the Civil Service for five years or more.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Growth and Manufacturing Output

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been *(a)* the average rate of growth for the United Kingdom and *(b)* the average rate of growth in manufacturing output in the United Kingdom for the period 1980 to 1986; and what are the comparable figures in the other members of the G7 group.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Companies (Depreciation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1957 the amount set aside by industrial and commercial companies out of profits for depreciation and the amount spent on new plant and equipment.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the yield of an increase of 1 percentage point in the rate of corporation tax at the present rate of profitability, all other things remaining unchanged;

(2) what information he has about the rate of corporation tax in or equivalent company taxes in other industrial countries;

(3) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his forecast of the increase in revenue from corporation tax and advance corporation tax in the current year and in the next financial year; and if he will provide separate figures for *(a)* North sea oil and gas companies, *(b)* other industrial and commercial companies and *(c)* financial companies and institutions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date for 1986 and 1987-88 the information in his answer dated 25 July 1986, *Official Report*, column *671*, concerning losses and allowances for corporation tax, including figures for advance corporation tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Updated estimates of losses and allowances will not be available until later this year. No reliable estimates of surplus ACT are available.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether on the same basis as table 5.1 in the 1986 edition of the United Kingdom national accounts, he will publish in the *Official Report* separate figures for North sea oil companies showing tax paid on profits due abroad and tax paid on other income.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the North sea oil companies an appropriation account in the same form as the table on page 173 of the 1987 annual supplement to "Economic Trends".

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is not available.

Company Taxation

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1957-58, 1967-68, 1977-78 and the latest financial year for which figures are available the total amount of tax paid by companies and the components, including the amounts deducted by way of tax on dividends, selective employment tax, national insurance contributions and national insurance surcharges, together with a forecast for the outturn in the current financial year and a forecast for the next financial year on the basis of profits earned to date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Manufacturing Industry (Profits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1957 trading profits of manufacturing industry as a percentage of total profits for all enterprises on *(a)* a gross basis and *(b)* net of tax and all allowances and relief.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1975, 1979 and 1985 the information given in tables 11.5 and 11.6 of the 1986 edition of the United Kingdom national accounts in terms of 1980 prices;

(2) whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1975, 1979 and 1985 the information for all fixed assets in table 10.3 of the 1986 edition of the United Kingdom national accounts in terms of 1980 prices.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for table 13.4 of the 1986 edition of the United Kingdom national accounts a division for the year 1975, 1979 and 1985 between manufacturing and other industrial and commercial companies for overseas securities, for overseas direct and other investment in the United Kingdom, and for direct and other investment abroad; and if he will specify the amount of direct investment in each direction accounted for by retained profits.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Double Taxation Relief

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect of an increase in the rate of corporation tax on double taxation relief on the overseas earnings of company profits; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount of double taxation relief in the latest year for which information is available, the amount of tax on which relief was given, and the change in relief consequent on a one per cent. increase in corporation tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Domestic Credit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the amount by which domestic credit expanded in each of the years 1983 to 1986 and the increase in each year as a percentage of sterling M3 at the beginning of the year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Statistics on domestic credit expansion were discontinued in June 1983. A note in the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* in that month explained why they were no longer relevant to the United Kingdom financial environment.

Tax Exemption

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the saving to the Exchequer in 1987-88 of ending the exemption for life assurance, pension and other funds of *(a)* income tax and *(b)* capital gains tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *213*]: The available information is as follows. These figures represent the estimated direct revenue effects of the reliefs on tax liabilities in 1987-88, taking the level of contributions that arise given the existence of the reliefs. The figures cannot therefore be interpreted as indicating the tax yield which might result from a change in the tax rules, as no account has been taken of changes in levels and methods of provision for retirement that might occur following such changes.

	Estimated direct revenue cost 1987-88 (£ million)
Life assurance premium relief	510
Retirement annuity premium relief	410
Employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes allowed as a deduction for income tax purposes	1350
Employers' contributions to occupational pension schemes not treated as taxable benefits in kind in the hands of the employees	2,300
Relief on investment income of occupational pension funds (assuming relief at the basic rate)	4,000

Note:

Costs of reliefs for pension contributions and investment income of pension funds cannot be aggregated as this would involve a degree of multiple taxation. No offsetting reductions are made to allow for tax liability arising on pensions paid out.

The above figures all represent income tax costs. I regret that no estimate is available of the cost of exempting capital gains derived by occupational pension schemes or by life offices as part of their pension business.

Fringe Benefits (Taxation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate for 1986-87 and his forecast for 1987-88 of taxable fringe benefits on the same basis as that shown in table 5.5 of the latest issue of *Social Trends*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *213*]: The information given in table 5.5 of *Social Trends 17* relates to 1983-84, and this is the latest year for which such detailed information is available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate for 1987-88 the number of recipients and the scale charge for taxable fringe benefits for directors and higher paid employees in the case of cars, free fuel and private medical insurance.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *214*]: Forecasts of the number of recipients and taxable value of benefits in 1987-88 are given in the table. These forecasts are based on projections from 1983-84, the latest year for which information is available, and are therefore subject to revision.

Benefit provided by employer	*Number of directors and higher paid employees receiving the benefit (thousands)*	*Taxable value of benefits*[1] *(£ million)*
Cars for private use	1,150	850
Free fuel for private use	700	450
Private medical insurance	650	130

[1] The estimates of taxable value of cars and free fuel are calculated from the scale charges for those benefits; the taxable value for private medical insurance reflects the costs to employers of providing this benefit.

Blind Persons

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost in Wales for 1987-88 of the increased relief for blind persons.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *215*]: About 45,000 blind people in the United Kingdom will benefit from the increased allowance at a cost of about £2 million. Information readily available centrally does not allow a reliable estimate to be provided of the effect on taxpayers in Wales.

Budget Statement

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of printing and distributing the Budget statement at railway stations on 17 March; and what was the income from the sale of these pamphlets.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *216*]: Summaries of the Budget were put on sale at Waterloo station on 17 March, price 20p, at an estimated cost of around £50. This was an experiment to test the market for such a summary undertaken in response to a recommendation by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that the Treasury, together with HMSO, should look into the possibility of further promotion of the Red Book and a perhaps revised Budget supplement to the Economic Progress Report. The income from sales was around £90, which it was agreed should be retained by the vendor for handling the experiment.

Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the receipts in 1987-88 from the taxation of unemployment benefit and all supplementary benefits; and what is his estimate of the gross and net cost of a 10 per cent. increase in benefit in each case.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *307*]: Supplementary benefit is only taxable when paid to the unemployed and the families of strikers. Estimates of the yield from taxing these supplementary benefit payments and unemployment benefit are as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	[1]300
1983-84	375

	£ million
1984-85	400
1985-86	400
1986-87	400
1987-88	375

[1] Unemployment benefits became taxable on 5 July 1982.

These estimates are based on national amounts of benefits paid to the unemployed and information about the individual circumstances of the unemployed respondents to the 1984 and 1985 family expenditure surveys. They may be revised when later information becomes available.

The costs of increasing the benefits by 10 per cent. in 1987-88 are estimated to be as follows:

United Kingdom

	Gross cost £ million	*Net cost after taxation and savings in other benefits* £ million
(a) 10 per cent. increase in unemployment benefit	150	75
(b) 10 per cent. increase in all supplementary benefit scale rates	1,250	[1]1,250
(c) 10 per cent. increase in both *(a)* and *(b)*	1,400	1,325

[1] There would be a small increase in tax receipts from supplementary benefits, probably of under £10 million.

Child Benefit

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will provide estimates for child benefit costs on the same basis for 1987-88 as in the figures given in his answer of 25 July, *Official Report*, at column *667*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *268*]: The information in the table, as with my previous reply of 25 July 1986, at columns *667-68*, relates to Great Britain. The first line gives the level of child benefit on a revenue neutral basis if it were made taxable.

Level of child benefit in 1987-88 £ per week	*Gross cost of increasing child-benefit from £7·25 per week* £ million per year	*Yield from taxing child benefit* £ million per year
9·70	1,500	1,500
15·00	4,900	2,400
20·00	8,000	3,300

Personal Incomes (Statistics)

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in real personal disposable income each year since 1960; and what comparable information he has regarding France, Germany, United States of America, and Japan.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to the reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *268-69*]: Information about annual percentage changes in United Kingdom real personal disposable income is published in table 3.16 of United Kingdom national accounts (the Central Statistical Office Blue Book) which is available in the Library of the House of Commons. To afford a comparison with the other countries specified the definition of real personal disposable income used in the United Kingdom national accounts has had to be slightly modified in the table that follows. Comparable information is not readily available for years before 1973.

Percentage changes in real personal disposable income over the preceding year[1]

	United Kingdom	*France*	*Federal Republic of Germany*	*United States*	*Japan*
1973	6·4	6·4	2·4	6·2	12·2
1974	−1·4	3·0	1·4	−0·7	3·4
1975	0·8	4·9	3·9	2·5	4·1
1976	−0·4	2·9	1·6	3·6	4·4
1977	−0·7	3·4	2·9	4·0	2·4
1978	7·2	5·4	3·7	4·4	4·3
1979	5·2	1·9	4·2	2·7	3·1
1980	1·8	0·0	1·4	1·0	1·1
1981	−2·0	3·2	0·2	2·7	1·8
1982	0·5	2·9	−2·0	0·8	2·1
1983	2·3	−0·6	−0·7	3·0	2·9
1984	2·5	−0·5	1·1	..	2·6
1985	2·7	..	..	..	..

[1] Before deducting depreciation but after deducting stock appreciation. The basis of the figures for the Federal Republic of Germany is different from that for the other four countries featured.

Source: Derived from "OECD National Accounts" Volumes I and II, 1986.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current volume of data items exchanged between his Department and the Inland Revenue; and what are the expected future volumes if the Government data network is fully implemented.

Mr. Lyell: Approximately 35 million data items are currently exchanged between the Department and Inland Revenue each year in the process of the collection of national insurance contributions and income tax. In addition, details of about 5 million pension rates and awards, and approximately 3 million items relating to pensioners working and paying income tax are provided by the Department to Inland Revenue. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 26 January at columns *90-91* for details of the possible use of the Government data network for this exchange in the future.

Benefits

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how he determines what constitutes a temporary absence when deciding on claims made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975 2(2).

Mr. Lyell: The social security Acts and regulations do not define what constitutes a temporary absence from Great Britain. This is a matter for the independent adjudicating authorities set up under the Acts, having regard to the particular circumstances of each individual case. The Secretary of State has no power to intervene or vary their decisions.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many claims made under the Social

Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975 for *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalidity benefit, were rejected between 1981 and 1985 on the grounds that their absence was not deemed to be a temporary absence from Great Britain;

(2) how many claims made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975 for *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalidity benefit, were rejected between 1981 and 1985 on the grounds that their absence was not deemed to be for the specific purpose of being treated for the incapacity which commenced before the claimant sought to leave Great Britain;

(3) how many claims made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended, were successful on appeal between 1981 and 1985 for *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalidity benefit;

(4) how many claims made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended, were successful between 1981 and 1986 for *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalidity benefit;

(5) whether he will provide a breakdown by country of intended destination for successful claimants of social security benefit under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended;

(6) whether he will provide a breakdown by country of intended destination of unsuccessful claimants of social security benefit under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested is not readily available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have been made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended, between 1981 and 1986.

Mr. Lyell: The number of claims made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended, between 1981 and 1986 is as follows:

	Retirement pension[1]	*Widows benefit*[1]	*Injury benefit*[2]	*Disablement benefit*[2]
1981	22,660	2,443	398	838
1982	22,076	2,076	303	799
1983	25,342	2,459	[3]316	813
1984	28,435	2,531	34	591
1985	33,757	2,453	—	717
1986	39,228	2,766	—	880

[1] The figures in these two columns refer to claims made by people in non-European Community and non-reciprocal countries and countries with which we have partial agreements. (Australia, New Zealand, Canada and United States of America). EC countries and countries with which we have reciprocal agreements, providing for payment of pension increases, are excluded as their claims are not made under the 1975 persons abroad regulations. The figures do not include people who get benefit in the United Kingdom who then go to live abroad.

[2] The figures in these two columns are figures for the whole world and it is not possible to separate out claims made by people in EC countries and countries with which we have agreements.

[3] Injury benefit was abolished in April 1983. The figures for 1983 and 1984 include late claims.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims have ben made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended, for *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* severe disablement allowance and *(c)* invalidity benefit.

Mr. Lyell: The Number of claims to sickness benefit, invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance made under the Social Security Benefit (Persons Abroad) Regulations 1975, as amended, for the period 1977 to 1986 is as follows:

	Number
1977	10,221
1978	16,868
1979	13,803
1980	15,012
1981	15,031
1982	14,402
1983	10,939
1984	8,792
1985	8,777
1986	6,668

Figures for 1975 to 1976, and separate figures for each benefit, are not available.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the estimated level of uptake of all means-tested benefits and the average level of payments forgone by the different claimant groups as a result of non-uptake of benefits;

(2) what is the most recent estimate of the number of people who lose out on means-tested benefits as a result of non-uptake.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 March 1987, c. *73*]: The latest take-up estimates for supplementary benefit, including weekly amounts unclaimed, related to 1983 and are contained in my reply on 30 October 1986 at columns *231-34*.

Estimates of take-up of family income supplement (FIS) for 1981-82 indicate that approximately half of those entitled claimed. Approximately 130,000 families left average weekly amounts of £8.30 unclaimed.

Updated estimates for FIS, and initial estimates for housing benefit, are expected to be published soon.

Estimates of take-up of welfare milk under low-income schemes indicate that approximately 7 per cent. of those entitled claimed in 1981. There are insufficient data available to calculate reliable take-up for the low-income schemes which provide help with National Health Service charges and travelling expenses.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Lyell: Surveys of the ethnic origin of staff in post and new entrants to the Department have been carried out in agreement with the Council of Civil Service Unions on the basis of voluntary self classification. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system. However, we have introduced a reminder procedure for our new entrant surveying which has increased our response rate and we continue to investigate ways of further improving our data base.

The non-response rate in our new entrant survey was 30 per cent., a figure which should reduce as the staff-in-post surveys progress. We hope to introduce a comprehensive programme of applicant monitoring and our pilot exercise showed a 15 per cent. non-response rate.

All the arrangements for ethnic origin monitoring are kept under review jointly by the Management and Personnel Office, Departments and the Council of Civil Service Unions. The objective is to increase the effectivenesss of the implementation of equal opportunity policy.

The results of the surveys will be published. Reports on the first phase of recruitment monitoring and the London and south-east and east Anglia staff-in-post surveys will be published later this year.

British Pensioners Association

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from or on behalf of the British Pensioners Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: We have received a number of letters from or on behalf of the British Pensioners Association (Canada) asking for pensions payable in Canada to be increased.

The Government accept the case in principle for paying annual increases to United Kingdom pensioners living in Canada. However, we do not have the resources to pay for all the improvements we should like to make to our social security system. We are therefore unlikely to be able to increase pensions in Canada in the foreseeable future.

Housing Benefit (Departmental Office)

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department's office at 206 Kennington Park road will deal with housing benefit supplement cases which have been outstanding since 1984.

Mr. Lyell: It is expected that all of these cases will have been dealt with by 31 March.

Local Offices, Peckham

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to his reply of 19 February 1987, *Official Report*, column *820*, which other areas from Department of Health and Social Security offices other than the areas administered by the Blenheim grove Department of Health and Social Security office will be covered by the new Department of Health and Social Security office planned on the Odeon cinema site in Peckham.

Mr. Lyell: Plans for the area to be administered by the new office are still under consideration.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the figures for each successive month from June 1986 to January 1987 for the amount of post at the Camberwell office of his Department in Blenheim grove not yet associated with files, outstanding postal claims, single payment claims and other assessment work.

Mr. Lyell: The work outstanding in the Department's Camberwell office is as follows:

	3 June 1986	*1 July 1986*	*29 July 1986*	*26 August 1986*	*23 September 1986*	*21 October 1986*	*18 November 1986*	*16 December 1986*	*13 January 1987*
Post unlinked with files for two or more days	1,640	2,282	2,802	1,938	1,166	1,165	928	1,191	985
Postal claims outstanding	486	424	710	836	764	651	539	389	446
Single payment claims outstanding	..	..	610	586	1,801	1,001	109	242	305
Outstanding cases awaiting review of assessment	799	363	1,749	1,282	547	181	300	259	357

.. Figures unavailable.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services pursuant to his reply of 19 February 1987, *Official Report*, column 820, what steps are being taken to reduce the amount of post not yet associated with files at the Blenheim grove Department of Health and Social Security office.

Mr. Lyell: Additional administrative assistants, the grade responsible for associating post with the relevant files, have been recruited on a casual basis. There are currently 25 in post against a complement of 19.

Sickness Benefit

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have been disqualified from receiving sickness benefit under regulation 17(1)*(d)* of the unemployment sickness and invalidity benefit regulations in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lyell: The information requested is not readily available. It could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will seek the views of voluntary organisations providing residential and other services for supplementary benefit recipients as part of the consultation process on the proposed social fund.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 25 March at column *211*.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the social fund budgets to be issued to local

social security offices in April 1988 will differ from the cash limits which are to be introduced when there is sufficient experience of the operation of the fund.

Mr. Major: The budgets will be specific to individual offices, and each office will be required to keep spending within its budget. Within the total amount available in the fund at any time, however, there will be contingency arrangements at national level to meet unforeseen demands while totally unexpected increases in expenditure at the end of a year can, if necessary, be accommodated by running down the standing balance in the fund. A cash limit, when introduced, will apply to the aggregate of voted money paid into the fund in any financial year.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involved a high risks of AIDS infection.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether his Department is aware of any reported case in Europe or the United States of America in which the AIDS virus has been transmitted from one sibling to another through non-sexual contact in young children; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is aware of any published paper which reports on the rate of occurrence of in which the AIDS virus has been transmitted from a young child to a parent through non-sexual contact; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: There is one published report of the putative transmission of HIV between two siblings in West Germany. In that case the authors speculated that a bite might have been responsible. There is a published report from the United States of America of a mother who is presumed to have become infected while nursing her child. The method of transmission was not known but the report noted the mother did not wear gloves while taking part in nursing procedures that involved direct contact with blood. To put these isolated case reports in context, it should be noted that studies of large numbers of close non-sexual contacts of AIDS cases and HIV carriers have not revealed casual transmission of the infection.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he is aware of any published paper which reports on the rate of occurrence of cell-free AIDS virus in the saliva of AIDS-infected men in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is aware of any published electron micrographs which demonstrate the presence of the mature AIDs virus in saliva; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are unaware of any published papers on cell-free or cell-associated AIDS virus in the saliva of infected men in the United Kingdom.

There is one publication in "Science 1984", volume 226, page 447, that showed an electron micrograph of mature AIDS virus obtained from the cultured saliva of a patient with AIDS-related complex. I am advised that with the methodology used in this study it would not be possible to determine if these viral particles were produced in vitro during the preparation of the specimen for electron microscopy, or were present in the native saliva. In any case, there is no evidence that saliva containing virus whether cell-free or cell-associated is capable of being infectious to humans.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement outlining the published data upon which his Department has based its conclusion that sharing the toothbrush of a person with AIDS can transmit the AIDS virus, but that kissing cannot.

Mr. Newton: There is no evidence to suggest that the sharing of a toothbrush has ever led to transfer of HIV infection. However, it is well known that toothbrushes can draw blood and it is possible that contaminated toothbrush fibres could directly innoculate the gums of another user. Recommendations against the sharing of toothbrushes were made because of this possible risk. The arguments against transfer of the AIDS virus during kissing are given in a letter from the Director of the Public Health Laboratory Service in the *British Medical Journal* on 14 February 1987, page 446.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he has received concerning *(a)* the presence of HIV in African bed bugs and *(b)* its ability to survive drying for seven days at room termperature; and what implications this advice has for the health education programme on AIDS.

Mr. Newton: Although last year a report demonstrated under laboratory conditions the presence of HIV in bedbugs one hour after a feed on blood virus mixture, I am advised that there is no epidemiological or entomological evidence at present that infection can be transmitted by this or any other insect. We therefore do not propose to alter the health education campaign.

Regarding the question of the survival of the virus on drying, under highly arfificial laboratory conditions concentrated material prepared from viral cultures has been found to contain very small amounts of active virus after seven days. It is highly unlikely that a dose of virus from natural sources, and capable of being infectious, would survive in this way but nevertheless we recommend sterilisation for any implements that could be contaminated and which might transfer virus from one person into another. This advice is already part of our health education programme for the public and for health professionals.

Mesothelioma

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of awards of industrial death benefit for mesothelioma in 1984 and 1985; and when he expects the 1986 figures to be available.

Mr. Major: The following table shows the numbers of awards of industrial death benefit for mesothelioma in 1984, 1985 and 1986:

Year	*Number of awards*
1984	139
1985	196
1986	247

Marsden Hospital, Burnley

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the reason for the recent closure of Peerplay ward at Marsden hospital, Burnley; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority is responsible for managing Marsden hospital. The hon. Member may wish therefore to address his inquiry to the chairman of that authority.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each district health authority in England in 1985 *(a)* the total number of beds in non-psychiatric National Health Service hospitals, *(b)* the total number of beds in private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics registered under section 23 of the Registered Nursing Homes Act 1984 and *(c)* the number of beds in private institutions expressed as a percentage of the number of non-psychiatric hospital beds;

(2) if he will give for each district health authority in England in 1985 *(a)* the total number of beds per 100,000 population in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984, *(b)* the total number of beds for care of the elderly (those over 65 years requiring long-stay nursing care) in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984 and *(c)* the number of beds for the care of the elderly per 100,000 population aged over 65 years in institutions registered under the Nursing Homes Act 1984.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as can be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost as soon as possible.

Road Accidents

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the age groups for whom road accidents comprise the leading cause of death.

Mrs. Currie: In 1985, the latest year for which date are available, the only age-group for whom road accidents form the leading cause of death, using the grouping of ages and causes in the Chief Medical Officer's annual report "On the State of the Public Health for the year 1985" (HMSO) is the 15 to 34 age group for each sex. (For the 1 to 14 age group in each sex road accidents are the second leading cause). The information is shown in the table.

Five main causes of death (and percentages of all causes of death), selected age groups, England and Wales, 1985

Males	*Females*
Age Group: 1 – 14	
Other causes of injury and poisoning E800 – E807; E830 – E949; E960 – E994 Number : 290 Per cent. : 19·74 per cent.	Congenital anomalies 740-759 Number : 203 Per cent. : 19·06 per cent.
Road vehicle accidents E810 – E829 Number : 286 Per cent. : 19·47 per cent.	Road vehicle accidents E810 – E829 Number : 138 Per cent. : 12·96 per cent.
Congenital anomalies 740 – 759 Number : 187 Per cent. : 12·73 per cent.	Other causes of injury and poisoning E800 – E807; E830 – E949; E960 – E999 Number : 136 Per cent. : 12·77 per cent.
Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs 320 – 389 Number : 129 Per cent. : 8·78 per cent.	Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs 320 – 389 Number : 108 Per cent. : 10·14 per cent.
MN of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue[1] 200 – 208 Number : 87 Per cent. : 5·92 per cent.	MN of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue[1] 200 – 208 Number : 54 Per cent. : 5·07 per cent.
All causes of death Number : 1,469 Per cent. : 100 per cent.	All causes of death Number : 1,065 Per cent. : 100 per cent.
Age Group 15 – 34	
Road vehicle accidents E810 – E829 Number : 1,696 Per cent. : 27·96 per cent.	Road vehicle accidents E810 – E829 Number : 402 Per cent. : 14·58 per cent.
Other causes of injury and poisoning E800 – E807; E830 – E949; E960 – E999 Number : 1,039 Per cent. : 17·13 per cent.	Other causes of injury and poisoning E800 – E807; E830 – E949; E960 – E999 Number : 309 Per cent. : 11·21 per cent.
Suicide and self-inflicted injury E950 – R959 Number : 874 Per cent. : 14·41 per cent.	Suicide and self-inflicted injury E950 – E959 Number : 224 Per cent. : 8·12 per cent.
Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs 320 – 389 Number : 339 Per cent. : 5·59 per cent.	MN of bone, connective tissue, skin and breast[1] 170 – 175 Number : 213 Per cent. : 7·73 per cent.
MN of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue[1] 200 – 208 Number : 286 Per cent. : 4·72 per cent.	MN of genitourinary organs[1] 179 – 189 Number : 171 Per cent. : 6·20 per cent.
All causes of death Number : 6,065 Per cent. : 100 per cent.	All causes of death Number : 2,757 Per cent. : 100 per cent.

ICD (9) numbers are shown after cause name.
[1] MN : malignant neoplasm.

Mersey Regional Health Authority

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of urgent cases awaiting admission to hospitals within the Mersey regional health authority at the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) if he will state the number of women waiting for gynaecological treatment in the Mersey regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: The latest information available centrally is included in a bound volume of the hospital waiting lists for health authorities in England at 30 September 1986, copies of which have been placed in the Library. For current information, the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority.

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of beds available for patients within the Mersey regional health authority for the calendar years 1985 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie: The latest information available centrally is included in the booklet "Hospital Statistics — Form SH3, National and Regional Summaries for 1985", copies of which have been placed in the Library. For more recent information the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority.

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to reduce hospital waiting lists in the Mersey regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: Mersey regional health authority will receive £1·35 million in 1987-88 from the national £25 million waiting list fund. This will allow hospitals in the region to treat over 7,700 additional waiting list cases through 19 projects. Full details of these projects have been placed in the Library. The improvements planned with the help of the waiting list fund are in addition to measures already being taken within the region to improve waiting lists and times from within existing resources.

Health Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is encouraging family practitioner committees to provide screening activities in spheres other than cervical and breast cancer.

Mr. Newton: In management guidance, performance reviews and annual scrutinies, family practitioner committees have been encouraged to collaborate with the relevant health authorities in developing joint policies on health promotion activities.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the circumstances covered by the authority issued in summer 1986 to make ex gratia payments to mobility allowance claimants.

Mr. Major: In March 1986, a judgment by the Court of Appeal overturned a decision of a tribunal of social security commissioners which had held that a medical appeal tribunal could and should consider, in appropriate cases, whether a claimant who was unable to satisfy the conditions for an award of mobility allowance as at the date of claim did satisfy them from a later date. Whilst the legislation was being amended to restore the law to what it was believed to be before the judgment, arrangements were made for extra-statutory payments to be made on the same basis as if awards from a later date were still permissible. As part of the amendment, now in section 71 of the Social Security Act 1986, such payments were put on to a statutory basis by treating them as payments of mobility allowance and by treating the recipients as having been entitled to the allowance for the period the payments were made.

Pensions

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average basic, graduated and earnings-related retirement pension awarded to women aged 60 years and men aged 65 years respectively, in each year since 1978, including the guaranteed minimum pension for contracted-out employees.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cold Weather Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the estimated cost of administering cold weather payments for the period January to March 1987, assuming maximum take-up; and how much was spent on publicising these payments;

(2) how many cold weather payments have been made in 1987 in each week for which information is available, to claimants in each of the categories *(a)* over 65 years, *(b)* chronically sick or disabled, and *(c)* with a child under the age of two years.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Hospital (Norwich)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what basis four sites considered for the Norwich second district general hospital were turned down due to the high quality of the agricultural land; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department is currently examining the submission put forward by the East Anglian regional health authority for a second district general hospital for Norwich. A final decision has not yet been reached but the agricultural value of possible sites is one of a range of relevant factors.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the preferred area for the Norwich second district general hospital was defined when six sites for the hospital were rejected on the grounds that they were outside that area; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This is essentially a question for the health authority concerned and my hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairman of the East Anglian regional health authority.

Placentas (Disposal)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what relationships are established between National Health Service maternity hospitals and private sector companies and institutes regarding the disposal of placentas; what is the cost to the National Health Service of such arrangements; and what is the procedure for informing patients.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Whooping Cough

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence is available to his Department regarding the connection between whooping cough and permanent severe brain damage in children.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 13 March 1987, c. *327*]: The Swansea research unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners studied 2,295 cases of whooping cough in the period 1977-79 and identified two children with inflammation of the brain, one of whom died. The

whooping cough report published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1981 noted 15 previously normal children who had recently contracted whooping cough. One died, one was left with major neurological problems and a third had a mild speech defect 12 months after the illness. The remaining 12 children were normal by that stage. In the United States, the journal "Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Reports" on 12 October 1984 reported that among 3,159 children who had whooping cough in 1982 and 1983, 1·9 per cent. developed convulsions and 0·3 per cent. inflammation of the brain.

Other references include "Infectious Diseases" by A. M. Ramsey and R. T. D. Edmond (1978) and "Infectious Diseases" by A. B. Christie (3rd edition 1980). Both these publications quote further examples and comment on the potentially serious outlook for children who develop convulsions in the course of whooping cough.

Board and Lodging Claimants

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer on Monday 9 March, if he will give the number of children belonging to the 6,000 claimants who received supplementary board and lodging payments, and who were said to have dependent children.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 March 1987, c. *409*]: In December 1984, an estimated 10,000 dependent children were in families receiving supplementary benefit board and lodging payments.

Immersion Hypothermia

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research work is being funded by public resources in the United Kingdom on the subject of immersion hypothermia in drowning.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 24 March 1987, c. *121*]: I understand that the Ministry of Defence is investigating all stages of immersion, including cold shock and short and long term immersion, as part of a continuing programme. It is also studying mathematical modelling techniques for predicting survival in cold water.

I further understand that the Medical Research Council, which is the main Government-funded agency for the promotion of medical and related biological research in this country and receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science, has been supporting research into biochemical and physiological studies on accidental and occupational hypothermia and other effects of heat and cold which could prove relevant to the study of immersion hypothermia.

ENVIRONMENT

Unleaded Petrol

101. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the extent to which unleaded petrol is now available in service stations.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand from the United Kingdom Petroleum Industry Association that there are now 211 service stations selling unleaded petrol in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's provision for a 5p duty differential has removed the remaining price barrier and I expect to see a major expansion of unleaded petrol outlets this year.

London Docklands Development Corporation (Houses and Flats)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of houses and flats built on London Docklands Development Corporation owned land were sold for *(a)* over £40,000 and *(b)* over £70,000 between July and December 1986.

Mr. John Patten: Details of house sales on LDDC sites to the establishment or the corporation from 1 July 1981 to 31 March 1986 are as follows:

	Per cent.
£40,000 or less	52
Between £40,000 and £100,000	48
£100,000 or more	0·2

Details relating to a £70,000 threshold cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Land Prices

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present average level of land prices of *(a)* housing, *(b)* offices and *(c)* industry in the following areas (i) the enterprise zone, (ii) the Isle of Dogs outside the enterprise zone, (iii) the urban district council area in Southwark and (iv) the urban district council area in Newham.

Mr. John Patten: Detailed analyses of current land values for specific uses in the London Dockland Development Corporation area are not available. However, open market values for housing land in docklands currently range between £600,000 and £3 million per acre, depending on factors such as size, location and terms of sale.

Inner City Areas

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline future initiatives planned for the residents of inner city areas.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend will shortly be laying before the House orders to establish urban development corporations in the black country, Tyne and Wear and Teesside, in addition to those already existing in London and Liverpool docklands and Trafford park, Greater Manchester.

I will shortly be launching the new urban regeneration grant which will directly support regeneration programmes for larger sites in urban areas under powers contained in the Housing and Planning Act 1986.

The Department is currently considering strategic three-year inner area programmes for 1987-88 to 1989-90 submitted by 57 urban authorities to which over £270 million has been allocated through the urban programme for 1987-88.

Resources for estate action — the Department's initiative to help local authorities tackle the problems of housing estates—will be increased by 50 per cent. to £75 million for 1987-88, enabling over 82,000 dwellings to be renovated.

Rates

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will meet the London chamber of commerce to discuss the impact of rates on businesses.

Mr. Chope: If the London chamber of commerce asks me to meet it, I shall be happy to do so.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Ridley: Surveys of the ethnic origin of staff in post and new entrants to the Civil Service have been carried out in agreement with the Council of Civil Service Unions on the basis of voluntary self-classification. There are no plans at present to change to a compulsory system. However, the Civil Service and the Council of Civil Service Unions are keen to improve the data base and are discussing practical ways in which this can be done.

Of all new entrants to my Department in the period 1 October 1985 to 1 March 1987, 34 per cent. failed to complete an ethnic monitoring questionnaire or gave an invalid response. We shall be sending reminders and this percentage should therefore decrease.

London Boroughs (Funds)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what payments from the former Greater London council and London residuary body funds, including capital transfer, he estimates will be paid to each London borough; what he expects to be the due date for payment; what percentage this represents of each borough's 1986-87 budget; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what payments have been made to each London borough so far of balances of the former Greater London council and London residuary body; when and how much was paid; what percentage this represents of each borough's 1986-87 budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The London residuary body is distributing two kinds of cash to rating authorities in Greater London: the closing revenue balances of the Greater London council, and capital receipts accruing to the LRB, in each case after deducting amounts required for the LRB's own purposes.

The precise method and timing of distribution of revenue balances is a matter for LRB, which estimates that it will distribute £89 million by 31 March 1987. The amounts to be distributed to each London borough are shown, and expressed as a percentage of the recipient council's budgeted total revenue expenditure for 1986-87.

Capital moneys arising in 1986-87 must, so far as possible, be distributed by 31 March 1987, with final adjustments before 30 June 1987, in accordance with the Local Government Reorganisation (Capital Money) (Greater London) Order 1987 (SI No. 118). The LRB estimates that the total amount to be distributed in respect of 1986-87 will be £31·7 million. The provisional sums receivable by each rating authority are shown, and expressed as a percentage of the authority's net capital expenditure forecast for 1986-87 as shown on its capital estimates and commitments return.

	GLC revenue balances to be distributed by 31 March 1987	*As per cent. of budgeted total revenue expenditure in 1986-87*	*Capital receipts arising in 1986-87*	*As per cent. of net capital expenditure forecast for 1986-87*
Inner London				
Camden	2,335,644	1·6	2,002,000	2·7
Greenwich	2,845,455	2·6	1,241,000	5·3
Hackney	2,475,282	1·8	2,184,000	4·0
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,985,232	2·6	1,119,000	5·1
Islington	2,176,246	2·1	2,914,000	4·2
Kensington and Chelsea	1,791,983	3·6	921,000	4·9
Lambeth	3,216,945	1·9	2,464,000	3·3
Lewisham	3,057,546	2·4	1,612,000	7·3
Southwark	2,840,185	2·1	2,197,000	4·7
Tower Hamlets	1,904,874	1·5	1,154,000	2·9
Wandsworth	3,402,689	3·8	1,274,000	4·0
Westminster	2,397,559	2·5	1,001,000	4·3
Outer London				
Barking and Dagenham	1,968,106	2·8	286,000	13·0
Barnet	3,928,308	3·1	476,000	13·9
Bexley	2,877,071	3·1	343,000	2·6
Brent	3,357,900	1·8	1,589,000	3·2
Bromley	3,930,945	3·4	462,000	4·6
Croydon	4,200,998	3·0	582,000	3·2
Ealing	3,803,161	2·6	920,000	3·1
Enfield	3,468,557	2·8	470,000	1·9
Haringey	2,635,998	1·6	1,850,000	6·1
Harrow	2,693,123	2·9	383,000	1·6
Havering	3,157,664	3·2	361,000	21·2
Hillingdon	3,058,864	2·9	516,000	9·4
Hounslow	2,605,699	2·3	659,000	6·1
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,766,553	3·1	167,000	1·6
Merton	2,160,438	3·0	334,000	3·3
Newham	2,758,510	1·7	1,532,000	4·3
Redbridge	2,963,775	3·1	395,000	3·2

	GLC revenue balances to be distributed by 31 March 1987	As per cent. of budgeted total revenue expenditure in 1986-87	Capital receipts arising in 1986-87	As per cent. of net capital expenditure forecast for 1986-87
Richmond-upon-Thames	2,115,648	3·1	322,000	4·8
Sutton	2,234,209	3·2	228,000	2·0
Waltham Forest	2,833,598	2·2	615,000	4·4

In addition, the LRB has forecast that a further £40 million of revenue balances and £109·7 million of capital receipts will be distributed to rating authorities in 1987-88.

Council House Sales

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the sale of council housing to sitting tenants for West Lindsey district council and East Lindsey district council; and what was the percentage of relevant stock existing in April 1980 which has been sold to date.

Mr. Tracey: From April 1980 to December 1986, West Lindsey has reported selling 858 dwellings to sitting tenants, equivalent to 15 per cent. of the council stock in April 1980; East Lindsey has reported 885 sales, equal to 13·5 per cent. of its April 1980 stock.

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements exist within his Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisation, for dealing with his responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Dr. Boyson: Almost all aspects of my right hon. Friend's responsibilities affect Greater London, to some degree. In particular, the Department's Greater London regional office has responsibilities for housing, planning, the urban programme, land registers and derelict land, and liaison with the London Docklands Development Corporation and the London residuary body. The Property Services Agency's London region is responsible for the Government's estate in London. Staff in post number 128 and about 3,700 respectively.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment with which Departments and non-departmental bodies his Department, and its related non-departmental public bodies, has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Dr. Boyson: My Department consults as appropriate other Departments and non-departmental public bodies on matters relating to services in London. No central record is kept of these numerous oral and written consultations.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Dr. Boyson: The Secretary of State has no proposals to change the current arrangements.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of his latest analysis of information collected from local authorities under section 56 of the Local Government Act 1985 concerning the costs, savings and other results of the abolition of the Greater London council; and what plans have been made for the regular dissemination of these results.

Dr. Boyson: I refer to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 4 February, at column 720, based on returns submitted by authorities under section 56 of the Local Government Act 1985, and joint manpower watch information, as at 30 June 1986. Section 56 returns have not yet been received from all authorities in respect of 30 September 1986. That information will be laid before the House as soon as possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Act. The Local Government Reorganisation (Manpower Information) Regulations 1986 provide for quarterly returns until June 1987 and thereafter for an annual return for March 1988 and March 1989.

Beach Pollution and Water Quality

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the results of his survey into beach pollution required by European Economic Community Directive 76/160 together with water quality information specified in the annex of the regulation.

Mr. Waldegrave: The results of the 1986 survey of bathing water quality are at present being collated. I expect to publish them in the near future.

Ammonia

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of increasing levels of ammonia pollution in the United Kingdom on concentrations of sulphate aerosols in the air.

Mr. Waldegrave: In principle, increasing levels of ammonia might be expected to increase concentrations of sulphate aerosols in the air. However, the chemistry of the link is very complex, and there have as yet been no credible quantitative assessments. This is the subject of active research, including work at Harwell laboratory for the Department.

Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the report of the Environment Committee on Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments of January 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend expects to reply to this report (which was published on 18 February) after the Easter recess.

Stonehouse Road, Rugeley

Mr. Hoddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his decision in respect of the appeal for planning permission to develop land off Stonehouse Road, Rugeley, Staffordshire, planning ref. No.: APP/X3405/A/07/064435.

Mr. Waldegrave: This planning appeal, which was received in the Department on 12 February 1987, is proceeding by the written representations method. This involves the parties in an exchange of statements followed by a visit to the site by the inspector. The site visit is presently being arranged. Because of the objections to the appeal lodged by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the appeal will in accordance with the guidelines published in paragraph 36 of the Government's response to the fifth report from the Environment Committee Session 1985-86, Cm 43, be recovered for the Secretary of State's decision.

I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as the decision is available.

Nursery Nurses

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the salary scale for nursery nurses.

Mr. Chope: The Department has received a number of letters on this subject. The remuneration of nursery nurses, however, is entirely a matter for local authorities.

Chlorofluorocarbon Emissions

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the European Economic Community Environment Ministers in Brussels on 20 March in so far as it is related to a proposed freeze on chlorofluorocarbon emissions.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 24 March, at column *134*, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of his Department to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of his Department have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to HIV;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of his Department are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Community Charge

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish tables in the *Official Report* showing in respect of each district and borough in England and Wales at what rateable value the estimated community charge will be equal to the domestic rate bill for one, two and three-adult households, with and without safety nets;

(2) if he will estimate the size of the total safety net provision for England and Wales in the first year of operation of the community charge; how many local authorities will contribute to this provision; how many will receive from it; and which will be the top 10 contributors and recipients;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables relating to the impact of the community charge, showing for each district and borough in England and Wales *(a)* the average domestic rate bills for 1986-87 and *(b)* his estimate of the community charge at a taxpayer level on a comparable 1986-87 basis, for one adult, two adult and three-adult households, with safety nets, and without safety nets, showing in each case the difference between rate bills and community charges.

Dr. Boyson: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Urban Development Grant (Bradford)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount of urban development grant granted to Bradford since its inception and the amount it was eligible for, including the current year.

Mr. Tracey: Since the introduction of urban development grant in 1982, a total of £1·74 million has been approved for three projects in Bradford which involve total private sector investment of £4·33 million. No restrictions are placed on the number or size of UDG applications invited local authorities may make in any year.

Squatters

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish any figures that are available centrally on the number of local authority and private dwellings occupied by squatters in inner London boroughs.

Mr. Tracey: Figures on the unlicensed occupation of dwellings ("squatting") are not held centrally.

Trees (Conservation)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to press for the listing of tree species endangered by commercial logging and all other non-sustainable developments under the convention of international trade and endangered species in order to regulate, and, if necessary, ban, the trade in threatened species.

Mr. Waldegrave: Trade in timber from a number of endangered species of trees is already controlled under the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). My scientific advisers on this matter, the Royal Botanic Gardens, are considering whether further species should be added but at present have insufficient evidence for the United Kingdom to submit proposals to the conference of the CITES parties in July. They are continuing their work and if the evidence so warrants, proposals will be prepared for the next conference in 1989.

Housing

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the total and *(b)* the percentage of houses in (i) the private and (ii) the public sector in England which were empty at the latest available date.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 18 November 1986 at columns *96-98*.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the complement of lawyers in his Department; how many of these posts are unfilled; and what percentage of lawyers in post have been in the Civil Service for five years or more.

Mr. Ridley: The complement of lawyers in the Department of the Environment is 42. Two of these posts are unfilled. Sixty-one per cent. of the lawyers in post have been in the Civil Service for five years or more.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now answer the question to which a holding reply was given on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *590*, concerning rate support grant.

Mr. Chope: I am planning to answer the hon. Member's question before the Easter recess and will do so by 3 April if possible.

Cost Floor Regulations

Mr. McLoughlin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to amend the cost floor regulations made under the Housing Act 1980 according to which any property built after 1974 cannot be sold at less than the cost of building; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March; c. *277*]: The cost floor cut-off date of 31 March 1974 is reviewed from time to time but there are no current plans to change it.

Housing and Planning Act 1986

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when section 6 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 will be brought into effect.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *277*]: It is planned to bring section 6 into operation at the same time as the related section 8 (which concerns the preservation of the right to buy on disposal of tenanted property to private sector landlords). The regulations necessary before that section can be brought into force are currently in preparation.

Thamesmead

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when Thamesmead Town Ltd. will take responsibility for the debt attached to Thamesmead.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *275*]: The debt related to Thamesmead will in any event remain with the London residuary body, but Thamesmead Town will be paying a fair price for the property and will relieve the public sector of an onerous future burden.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many officials from his Department are on the board of Thamesmead Town Ltd.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *275*]: One official seconded from the Department is a co-opted member of the board but has no vote.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to publish the auditors' report for 1985-86 and 1986-87 for the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *275*]: The annual report of the auditors of LDDC's accounts are published each year in the corporation's statutory annual report and accounts, which is laid before Parliament shortly before each summer recess.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the London Docklands Development Corporation has for Pura Foods of Leamouth.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1987, c. *275*]: I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer on 25 March at column 165.

Urban Programme

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of urban programme moneys spent in *(a)* Greater Manchester, and *(b)* the City of Manchester (i) at current prices, and (ii) in constant 1987-88 prices for the years 1982-83 to 1987-88 inclusive.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, Friday 27 March 1987, c. *278*]: Urban programme resources allocated to the Manchester/Salford partnership from 1982-83 to 1987-88 inclusive, in cash terms and in 1987-88 real terms prices, are shown in the table. Figures are not available centrally for the split of resources between the different partners. The figures shown are outturns for the years 1982-86, estimated outturn for 1986-87, and provisional allocation for 1987-88.

Urban Programme Resources: Manchester/Salford partnership

Year	*£ million*	*£ million in 1987-88 prices*
1982-83	23·1	28·9
1983-84	23·9	28·5
1984-85	23·7	27·1
1985-86	23·2	25·0
[1]1986-87	23·4	24·5
[2]1987-88	23·8	23·8

[1] Estimated outturn.
[2] Initial allocation.

Bees

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) why he is proposing that the powers under section 74 of the Public Health Act 1961, which permit local authorities to control and eradicate pests, should be extended to bees; and if he will make a statement;

(2) why he described bees as urban pests in his proposals entitled "Air Pollution Control in Great Britain", published in December 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what requests he has had from local authorities seeking additional powers to control and eradicate bees through the extension of the species covered by section 74 of the Public Health Act 1961; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Discussions with local authorities have shown that existing powers have not always been adequate to deal with nuisance caused by certain animals or insects, including swarming bees, in urban areas. In our consultation paper "Air Pollution Control in Great Britain", we have therefore sought views on the proposal that the existing powers of local authorities to control pigeons and certain other birds, in section 74 of the Public Health Act 1961, should be extended to other birds, mammals or insects causing a nuisance, if specified by an order of the local authority. Such an order would be made after consultation and advertisement, and would be subject, if opposed, to confirmation by the Secretary of State. We shall consider carefully the reaction of local authorities and others to all the proposals in the consultation paper, including those relating to nuisance sometimes caused by swarming bees.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he did not consult or notify the British Beekeepers Association on his proposals to provide local authorities with the power to control and eradicate bees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I regret that the British Beekeepers Association was not among the 420 organisations specifically consulted on wide-ranging proposed changes to air pollution legislation. However, the consultation paper is available to, and comments are welcome from, anyone with an interest in the matters under review. We will carefully consider the views of beekeepers on the proposals relating to bees.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the impact which bees have on the environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: Bees are both economically and ecologically immensely important, especially as pollinators of fodder crops, various fruit crops and many wild plants. But uncontrolled swarms of bees can cause local environmental nuisance, especially in urban areas.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Secretarial and Research Allowance

Mr. Pike asked the Lord Privy Seal what the secretarial and research allowance will be for right hon. and hon. Members for 1987-88.

Mr. Biffen: The resolution of the House of 20 July 1984 on the office, secretarial and research allowance provides for an increase with effect from 1 April each year by the same percentage by which the salary scale maximum plus inner London weighting, of a senior personal secretary in the Home Civil Service is increased.

Pay negotiations on the level of increase for this grade, effective from 1 April 1987, have not yet been concluded; therefore, I am unable to say what the allowance will be in 1987-88.

AIDS (Palace of Westminster Staff)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) whether he has any plans to arrange for staff of the Palace of Westminster to be screened for antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(2) whether any current or former staff of the Palace of Westminster have been found to have developed AIDS or antibodies to human immunodeficiency virus;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that staff of the Palace of Westminster are warned about those homosexual and other activities which are deemed to involve a high risk of AIDS infection.

Mr. Biffen: I shall reply shortly.

Car Park

Mr. Marlow asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will take action to require that cars left overnight in the House of Commons car park are parked other than in the top three levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: It is desirable that cars, parked by or on the authority of Members, which arrive early or which remain for more than a short time, should wherever possible be parked on the third floor, thus leaving the higher levels for late arrivals or short-stay parking. A recommendation to this effect was made by the Services Committee in its fifth report of Session 1975-76; and I would welcome the co-operation of all right hon. and hon. Members in this respect.

THE ARTS

Public Library Service

42. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people using the public library service.

69. **Mr. Barron** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people borrowing from the public library service.

70. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people borrowing from the public library service.

81. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people using the public library service.

82. **Mr. Pike** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people using the public library service.

Mr. Luce: There are no full estimates of the number of people using the public library service in England. Surveys suggest that about one-third of the population use the service at least once a month, and two thirds at least once during the year.

43. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had about possible initiatives to increase the number of people using the public library service.

Mr. Luce: None.

50. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people using the public library service information services.

61. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people using the public library service information services.

Mr. Luce: There are no estimates of the number of people using the information services provided by the public library service in England. In 1985-86 there were 31 million recorded information inquiries, in 91 authorities. Many of these will have come from local industry and businesses.

Theatre Audiences

45. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Minister for the Arts what records are maintained by the Office of Arts and Libraries for theatre audiences.

72. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Ministr for the Arts what records are maintained by the Office of Arts and Libraries on theatre audiences.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council maintains records of attendances at subsidised theatres, and has just published figures for 1985-86, which show audiences of 5·6 million, an increase of 4 per cent. over 1984-85. The Society of West End Theatre publishes figures for its membership: over 10 million tickets have been sold in each of the last two years.

55. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will set up a study of the audiences for theatre.

Mr. Luce: No. Adequate records are already maintained by the Arts Council for the country as a whole and by the Society for West End Theatre. The City university recently carried out an extensive survey of London theatre audiences.

Photographic Exhibitions

46. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will set up a study of the audiences for photographic exhibitions.

Mr. Luce: It would be for the Arts Council, or any other body presenting a photographic exhibition, to carry out a study of the audience.

Museum Charges

47. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the Museums Association to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

74. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the Museums Association to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

75. **Dr. Godman** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the Museums Association to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

86. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the Museums Association to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

Mr. Luce: No, I have received no approach from the Museums Association on this subject.

49. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Civil Service trade unions and associations to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

51. **Mr. Allan McKay** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Civil Service trade unions and associations to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

65. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Minister for the Arts when he last met the Civil Service trade unions and associations to discuss the effects of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) earlier today.

52. **Mr. Cunliffe** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will establish a unit within the Office of Arts and Libraries to monitor the effect of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

57. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will establish a unit within the Office of Arts and Libraries to monitor the effect of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

80. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will establish a unit within the Office of Arts and Libraries to monitor the effect of the introduction of museum charges on attendance.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) on 27 March 1987.

77. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will set up an inquiry into the effect of museum entrance charges on the level of admission.

79. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will set up an inquiry into the effect of museum entrance charges on the level of admission.

87. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will set up an inquiry into the effect of museum entrance charges on the level of admission.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) on 27 March 1987.

Leicester

48. **Mr. Janner** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received regarding funding for the arts in Leicester.

Mr. Luce: I have received no such representations recently. I am pleased to learn that the Arts Council has increased its grant to East Midlands Arts for 1987-88 for the funding of arts activities in that region, including Leicester.

Museums

53. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the total number of young people visiting museums.

Mr. Luce: The ages of museum visitors are not usually recorded. However sample surveys of visitors to certain national museums and galleries suggest that between one fourth and one third of all visitors are under 20 years old.

54. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had about possible initiatives to increase the number of people visiting museums.

59. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had about possible initiatives to increase the number of people visiting museums.

84. **Mrs. Golding** asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has had about possible initiatives to increase the number of people visiting museums and galleries.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) earlier today.

62. **Mr. Soley** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people visiting museums in London.

Mr. Luce: The estimated number of visitors during 1986 to the national museums and galleries in London that are sponsored by my Department was 14,654,133. No comparable figure is available for visits to the other 150 or so museums in London.

67. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people visiting museums.

Mr. Luce: The information collected for the Museums Association database project suggests that some 68 million visits were made to museums and galleries in the United Kingdom in 1985, the most recent year for which figures are available.

71. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate of the number of people visiting museums in the south-west.

Mr. Luce: The information collected for the Museums Association database project suggests that some 5·3 million visits were made to museums and galleries in the south-west of England in 1985, the most recent year for which figures are available.

73. **Mr. Blair** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his estimate of the trend in the numbers of people visiting museums in the last five years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Luce: The number of visitors to the national museums and galleries sponsored by my Department in each of the last five years was as follows:

	Number
1982	16,273,367
1983	16,751,471
1984	16,983,778
1985	17,556,789
1986	16,821,151

Theatre Companies (Touring)

56. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to promote the touring of theatre companies.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council has re-established its touring department under a new controller of touring. Recent initiatives include introducing new procedures for co-productions with regional theatres, independent producers and groups specially formed for touring, and special provision for the continuation of the RSC Newcastle season and for the small-scale tours undertaken by the RSC and the Royal Exchange company from Manchester.

Arts Events

58. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Minister for the Arts what his estimate is of the number of young people attending arts events in Wales.

Mr. Luce: This information is not recorded at present and would be costly to research. Audience surveys for the performing arts in Wales suggest that young people under 25 represent about one third of audiences, particularly for drama.

Regional Arts Associations

60. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will meet the chairmen and directors of regional arts associations to discuss ways in which the audience for the arts might be widened.

78. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will meet the chairmen and directors of regional arts associations to discuss ways in which the audiences for the arts might be widened.

Mr. Luce: I have met most of the chairmen and directors of regional arts associations in my visits to the regions, and we have frequently discussed how the arts can be made more accessible. The regional arts associations are playing a full part in my new arts marketing scheme.

Arts Centres (Audiences)

63. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken in the past year to widen audiences attending arts centres.

Mr. Luce: I have discussed the widening of the audience for the arts with many people since taking office, and have been impressed by the range of activity at the arts centres I have visited. The Arts Council include in its criteria for the allocation of grant the commitment of an arts body to the attraction of wider audiences. My new arts marketing scheme will, I hope, encourage many arts bodies to produce imaginative ideas for marketing themselves.

Special Arts Projects

64. **Mr. Freud** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has any plans to alter the available contingency finance for special arts projects.

Mr. Luce: No. Arrangements exist for access to the Contingency Reserve in appropriate circumstances.

Audiences (Wales)

66. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken in the past year to widen audiences for the arts in Wales.

Mr. Luce: The Welsh Arts Council, in partnership with local authority and local arts organisations, supports three

marketing consortia. Cardiff and Swansea art markets promote ideas for increasing audiences for the arts in their areas. In February 1987 a new initiative, Arts Marketing in Dyfed, was started in a rural area.

Acceptances in Lieu

68. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has any proposals to change the existing acceptance-in-lieu procedures.

Mr. Luce: A change to the existing procedures was announced in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1987/88" by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury on Tuesday 17 March. In future, those offering items for acceptance in lieu of tax will have the option of having interest charges waived on offers which are eventually accepted at the original agreed valuation, or of allowing interest charges to accrue and seeking a revaluation of the item before final acceptance. The choice may be made at any time before the memoranda of acceptance are exchanged.

88. **Mr. Charles Morrison** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the recent operation of the acceptance-in-lieu provisions.

Mr. Luce: The present provisions are working well, as illustrated by the recent acceptance in principle of Constable's "Stratford Mill" or "The Young Waltonians". This offer is a demonstration that the arrangements for a call on the reserve announced by my predecessor in July 1985 are operating effectively and speedily.

I would also refer my hon. Friend to the recent announcement by my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury that offerers now have the option either of having interest charges waived, with the item being accepted at the valuation originally agreed, or of seeking final acceptance, in which case accrued interest charges will be payable.

Music Audiences

78. **Mr. Crowther** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken in the past year to widen audiences for music.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council includes in its criteria for the allocation of grant the commitment of an arts body to the attraction of wider audiences. My new arts marketing scheme will, I hope, encourage many arts bodies to produce imaginative ideas for marketing themselves.

British Film Institute (Regional Theatres and Centres)

83. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Minister for the Arts what is his latest estimate for the size of the audience for attendances at British Film Institute regional theatres and centres.

Mr. Luce: Information as follows:

	Million
1985	1·294
1986	1·367

The figures exclude audiences at the national film theatre in London.

Audiences

85. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Minister for the Arts what steps he has taken in the past year to widen audiences.

Mr. Luce: I hope that the introduction of my new arts marketing scheme will encourage many arts bodies to produce imaginative ideas which will in turn attract wider audiences.

Local Authority Libraries

89. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Minister for the Arts what was the total expenditure, both current and capital, on local authority libraries in constant terms in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1984-85.

Mr. Luce: Government figures show expenditure on public libraries in England at 1984-85 prices as follows:

	Current £ million	*Capital £ million*
1978-79	313	13
1984-85	326	28

The 1978-79 figures have been calculated using the Treasury GDP deflator.

Arts Council (Regional Co-operation)

90. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the future of co-operation between the Arts Council and the regional arts associations.

Mr. Luce: Co-operation between the Arts Council and regional arts associations is already effective and has been substantially increased by the council's policies for regional development. To further these aims, I have decided to appoint three regional representatives to the council, each of whom will represent the regional arts associations in a broad geographical band. They will be able to answer for the regional arts associations and to put the regions case at the council. The first three appointees under these arrangements will be Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas, who is already serving, Mr. Robin Guthrie and Mr. Denys Hodson.

Ministerial Visits

91. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Minister for the Arts how many arts functions, arts bodies, museums and libraries he has visited in total since his appointment as Arts Minister.

Mr. Luce: Over 200.

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

92. **Viscount Cranborne** asked the Minister for the Arts whether he intends to continue the business sponsorship inceitive scheme for 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: The business sponsorship incentive scheme has proved highly successful in raising over £11 million of new money for the arts and attracting over 400 first-time sponsors. As I told the House during the debate on the arts on 12 March, I have undertaken to continue the scheme in 1988-89.

British Theatre Museum

93. **Mr. Richard Shepherd** asked the Minister for the Arts when he expects the British theatre museum to open.

Mr. Luce: The trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum plan to open the theatre museum in Covent Garden to the public on 24 April 1987.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing his estimate of the number of cases in which higher rate tax relief will be given on mortgage interest payments in the current and in the next financial year, together with *(a)* the gross amount of interest qualifying for relief, *(b)* the amount of higher rate relief payable and *(c)* the number of recipients of working age and their distribution by personal category and by range of gross income, together with the average amount of relief given at the standard and higher rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *40*]: Estimates are in the tables. These are based on projections from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes, and they are therefore subject to revision. I regret that it is not possible to provide reliable separate estimates for the small number of high income elderly taxpayers with mortgages.

Total income	*Cases with relief at excess over basic rates ('000)*	*Total qualifying mortgage interest (£ million)*	*Mortgage interest relief at basic rate (£ million)*	*Mortgage interest relief at excess over basic rate (£ million)*	*Total mortgage interest relief (£ million)*	*Average relief at basic rate (£)*	*Average relief at excess over basic rate (£)*	*Average total relief (£)*
Table 1								
Taxpayers with mortgage interest relief at excess over basic rate 1986-87								
Single persons								
Under £20,000	5	10	5	0	5	600	30	630
£20,000-£25,000	35	100	25	5	30	650	190	840
£25,000-£30,000	20	50	15	10	25	700	380	1,080
£30,000-£40,000	15	40	10	10	20	700	460	1,160
£40,000-£50,000	5	10	5	5	10	750	670	1,420
Over £50,000	10	20	5	5	10	750	820	1,570
Total	90	230	65	35	100	700	360	1,060
Married couples								
Under £20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
£20,000-£25,000	165	310	90	25	115	540	110	650
£25,000-£30,000	250	540	155	60	215	630	240	870
£30,000-£40,000	185	420	130	70	200	690	380	1,070
£40,000-£50,000	60	150	45	35	80	730	590	1,320
Over £50,000	50	150	45	45	90	770	770	1,540
Total	710	1,570	465	235	700	650	320	970
Single persons and married couples								
Under £20,000	5	10	5	0	5	600	30	630
£20,000-£25,000	200	410	115	30	145	580	130	700
£25,000-£30,000	270	590	170	70	240	630	250	880
£30,000-£40,000	200	460	140	80	220	680	390	1,070
£40,000-£50,000	65	160	50	40	90	730	600	1,330
Over £50,000	60	170	50	50	100	770	780	1,550
Total	800	1,800	530	270	800	650	330	970
Table 2								
Taxpayers with mortgage interest relief at excess over basic rate 1987-88.								
Single persons								
Under £20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
£20,000-£25,000	40	100	30	10	40	630	200	830
£25,000-£30,000	25	65	15	10	25	700	430	1,130
£30,000-£40,000	15	45	10	10	20	710	590	1,300
£40,000-£50,000	10	20	5	5	10	730	800	1,530
Over £50,000	10	30	10	10	20	750	900	1,650
Total	100	260	70	45	115	670	430	1,100
Married couples								
Under £20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
£20,000-£25,000	140	280	70	10	80	560	100	660
£25,000-£30,000	275	585	165	70	235	570	260	830
£30,000-£40,000	235	555	150	100	250	640	420	1,060
£40,000-£50,000	75	190	55	50	105	660	630	1,290
Over £50,000	75	210	50	65	115	720	840	1,560
Total	800	1,820	490	295	785	620	380	1,000

Total income	Cases with relief at excess over basic rates ('000)	Total qualifying mortgage interest (£ million)	Mortgage interest relief at basic rate (£ million)	Mortgage interest relief at excess over basic rate (£ million)	Total mortgage interest relief (£ million)	Average relief at basic rate (£)	Average relief at excess over basic rate (£)	Average total relief (£)
Single persons and married couples								
Under £20,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
£20,000-£25,000	180	380	100	20	120	580	130	710
£25,000-£30,000	300	650	180	80	260	590	270	860
£30,000-£40,000	250	600	160	110	270	650	430	1,080
£40,000-£50,000	85	210	60	55	115	670	630	1,300
Over £50,000	85	240	60	75	135	730	840	1,570
Total	900	2,080	560	340	900	620	380	1,000

Note: Assuming interest rates of 12·25 per cent. in April 1987 and 11·25 per cent. subsequently.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 31 March 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. John Saunderson

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Attorney-General whether it is his intention to prosecute under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act Mr. John Saunderson a retired civil servant for revealing official information concerning the personal tax affairs of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the press.

The Attorney-General: No.

ENERGY

Margam Mine

84. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received a proposal from British Coal for the development of a new mine at Margam.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am pleased to announce the Government's approval of British Coal's proposal to construct a new mine at Margam in south Wales at a cost of £90 million. Discussions with British Coal about aspects of the financing of the project are continuing and in endorsing this proposal the Government will strongly support British Coal's case for an ECSC loan attracting an interest rate subsidy .

The Margam project will directly create 780 jobs and will indirectly generate a similar number of jobs. It will make an immediate and significant contribution to the alleviation of high unemployment in the locality. The coal represents a secure source of supply for many years to come for BSC coke ovens at Port Talbot and Llanwern in place of imported coals.

The Margam project will incorporate modern British mining technology capable of high levels of sustained performance. Even so, against the background of the current and prospective low prices for coking coal available on the market, British Coal has told me that the project will not proceed unless there is agreement on the six-day production as the viability of the mine depends on equipment being operated six days a week; I agree with this judgment. In reaching my decision I have taken into account the significant advances in productivity and the positive response of the men and management in south Wales. The increase in the area's productivity of 32 per cent. over the last year has shown what the combination of forward-looking attitudes and investment in new British mining technology can achieve at existing pits. I am confident that the area will continue to adapt to the changes that are essential if the industry is to prosper.

PRIME MINISTER

Press Office

Q22. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what is the practice as regards the nature of activity undertaken by her press office during the period of a general election; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

During an election period the No. 10 press office is governed by long-standing rules curtailing the activities of the Government information service.

British Nuclear Tests Veterans Association

Q170. **Mr. Buchan** asked the Prime Minister whether she will now meet representatives of the British Nuclear Tests Veterans Association.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

State Earnings-related Pension

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply to the hon. Member for Burnley on 24 March, *Official Report*, column 161, she will give the current state earnings-related pension weekly figure in 1979 cash terms.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The weekly state earnings-related pension of £16·25 currently received by a man who retired on average earnings in April 1986 would be £9·03 expressed in April 1979 cash terms.

Engagements

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Canavan asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 March.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend is currently on a visit to the Soviet Union.

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member

for Burnley on 24 February, *Official Report*, column *195*, if he will disaggregate the rate support grant totals to show figures for block grant and domestic rate relief grant.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Burnley District Council

	Cash (£ million)			Cost ('81-82 prices) (£ million)		
	Block grant	*Domestic rate relief grant*	*Rate support grant*	*Block grant*	*Domestic rate relief grant*	*Rate support grant*
1981-82	4·750	0·685	5·435	4·750	0·685	5·435
1982-83	4·382	0·699	5·081	4·086	0·652	4·738
1983-84	4·834	0·705	5·539	4·315	0·629	4·944
1984-85	4·772	0·709	5·481	4·083	0·607	4·690
1985-86	4·211	0·717	4·928	3·392	0·577	3·969
1986-87	4·391	0·723	5·114	3·434	0·565	3·999

Pendle District Council

	Cash (£ million)			Cost ('81-82 prices) (£ million)		
	Block grant	*Domestic rate relief grant*	*Rate support grant*	*Block grant*	*Domestic rate relief grant*	*Rate support grant*
1981-82	3·777	0·653	4·430	3·777	0·653	4·430
1982-83	3·774	0·665	4·439	3·519	0·620	4·139
1983-84	3·716	0·669	4·385	3·317	0·597	3·914
1984-85	3·700	0·671	4·371	3·166	0·574	3·740
1985-86	3·498	0·680	4·178	2·817	0·548	3·365
1986-87	3·671	0·684	4·355	2·871	0·535	3·406

In 1981-82 and 1982-83 the amounts are final rate support grant payments. In 1983-84 to 1986-87 the amounts are grant entitlements based on the latest supplementary reports in each year.

The figures for 1979-80, 1980-81 are not comparable with those for the following years because the arrangements for paying rate support grant changed in 1981-82.

Notes:

(1) Rate support grant comprises block grant and domestic rate relief grant.
(2) Cash values converted to 1981-82 price levels using the GDP deflator.
(3) Figures may not add due to rounding.

Housing and Planning Act 1986

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the implementation of the Housing and Planning Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The majority of both the housing and planning provisions of this Act have already been implemented. During 1987 we have received a small number of representations on the implementation of the remaining provisions, notably sections 6 and 9 (sale of publicly rented dwellings), section 15 (grants for the improvement or repair of common parts of buildings), and paragraphs 7 and 8 of schedule 11 (award of costs at inquiries). We intend to bring the outstanding provisions into effect whenever this is practicable.

Caravan and Tent Sites

Mr. Hubbard-Miles asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when further consultation on legislation to unify licensing controls over caravan and tent sites is likely to take place.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Department and the Welsh Office will today circulate a consultation paper to local authority associations and interested organisations in England and Wales. This proposes certain minor amendments to the proposals for introducing a single site licensing system for both tents and caravans, which were the subject of a private Member's Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Hubbard-Miles) in the 1983-84 Session of Parliament. Consultation should also enable us to confirm that there remains a consensus in favour of reform of the existing legislation. I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has taken a decision on London Docklands Development Corporation's development strategy for the royal docks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have today approved a strategy for the royal docks proposed to me by the London Docklands Development Corporation which will turn 270 hectares of derelict land into a new employment, retailing, leisure and residential centre for London. The LDDC strategy, completed in consultation with me, will provide 7,000 housing units and some 48,000 jobs.

On 26 November last my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport authorised London Regional Transport to introduce a Bill for an eastern extension to the docklands light railway. The Government announced that they would support the Bill during its passage through Parliament provided LDDC came forward with an acceptable scheme for financing the project without calling on public funds. The Government are now satisfied that the £140 million extension could be financed from the sale of land owned by the LDDC. The Government will accordingly be lending their support to the Bill which will shortly be coming forward for Second Reading.

The 7·7 km extension of the docklands light railway, which will link Poplar to Beckton via the royal docks, will provide the public transport infrastructure essential to underpin the development strategy.

These decisions taken together pave the way for massive new development in the area which will exploit to the full opportunities offered by the royal docks.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Condoms)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the practice of other European Community Governments in respect of the distribution to prisoners of condoms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are aware of reports that in some European prison systems condoms are being made available to prisoners, but we have no systematic or verified information about policy or practice abroad. I have nothing to add to the reply to the hon. Member's earlier question on this subject on 12 February, at column 324.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the financial implications of the reorganisation of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has made it clear that one of the primary objectives of the reorganisation of the force is to make the most effective use of resources. The major cost of planning and implementing the reorganisation was that of the staff involved, estimated at some £1¼ million, since June 1983. In addition, building alterations and associated work required to match existing accommodation to the new force structure have cost about £348,000 so far with a further £245,000 planned. This expenditure has been contained within the Metropolitan police cash limits.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the percentage of a police officer's time in London spent *(a)* in the police station and *(b)* on the street.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that information on how individual officers apportion their time as between street and station duties is not collected centrally. In 1986, however, 45·9 per cent. of the uniformed constable man days available for divisional use were allocated to street duty (which includes some time in stations) and 20·8 per cent. to station duty. The balance was accounted for by aid to other divisions or squads, training and other miscellaneous duties.

Mr. Di Carlo

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests were received from the Italian police for the arrest of Mr. Di Carlo; on what dates they were received; and what action was taken in each case.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the only specific request for the arrest of Di Carlo was received on 16 September 1981. Information was supplied on a number of occasions and was acted upon in each case; but Di Carlo could not be traced at any of the addresses supplied by the Italian authorities.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on what date the Metropolitan police found that the file on Mr. Di Carlo had been lost; and what action was taken to find it;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether the Metropolitan police had a file on Mr. Di Carlo when he was arrested by officers of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in June 1985.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the file on Mr. Di Carlo was opened in 1980 and has never been missing.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether the central drugs intelligence unit was aware of Mr. Di Carlo's involvement with drugs; and from what date it was in contact with the Italian police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, although the central drugs intelligence unit had no direct contact with the Italian police, the unit was aware through the extradition squad and Interpol of Di Carlo's suspected involvement with drugs from June 1980.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether there will be an internal investigation by the Metropolitan police into the handling of the Di Carlo case; and whether he will place copies of the reports of all such investigations in the Library.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, who has been kept informed of all the circumstances of the case, does not consider any such investigation to be necessary.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what action was taken to check the information and addressses of Mr. Di Carlo given by the Italian police to the Metropolitan police;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether Her Majesty's Customs and Excise informed the Metropolitan police that a lorry belonging to Fauci Continental Imports was carrying drugs; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not the practice to disclose operational information of this kind.

Cruelty to Animals

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of evidence of increasing cruelty to animals, he will now seek to

strengthen the provisions of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1911 by giving the police power of entry where cruelty is suspected and the courts power to ban persons convicted of cruelty from keeping any type of animal, and by widening the protection given to wild animals held in captivity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government are wholeheartedly committed to combating cruelty to animals. We are giving support to a Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) to double the maximum penalties under the Protection of Animals Act 1911. We have given careful thought to the proposal that the police should have a power of entry to investigate allegations of cruelty to animals, but believe that this would not be justified. We are looking carefully and sympathetically at the other proposals for changes to the legislation.

Police (Northumbria)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he intends to *(a)* increase grant to, or *(b)* increase the establishment of police forces in Northumbria in view of the high incidence of organised crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 18 December 1986 my right hon. Friend approved an increase of 35 constable posts for the Northumbria police with immediate effect, and 40 such posts with effect from 1 April 1987. We shall consider the force's needs further when it has recruited up to its new establishment.

Police grant is payable as a percentage of expenditure by each police authority. We have no plans at present to further increase the percentage which was increased to 51 per cent. last year in view of the demands on the police service. Block grant is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Passports

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will hold discussions with other EEC countries to obtain a common system of security to prevent the forgery of passports;

(2) what research has been conducted to ensure the security of British passports against forgery;

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that British passports are protected from forgery by the highest standards of modern technology;

(4) how many instances of forged British passports have been discovered by his Department in each of the last five years;

(5) if he is satisfied with the security of the present British passport against forgery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: No passport can be immune from abuse, and a careful watch is therefore maintained by the passport department and the immigration service to check such abuse of British passports. In 1986, the only complete year for which figures are available, some 170 cases were recorded where passport details had been altered in various ways, and nine counterfeit documents were discovered. The security features to be incorporated in the common EC format machine readable passport due for issue from July 1988 will take account of experience gained so far.

While adopting common security features in all EC passports would not necessarily have operational advantages, there is close co-operation with our European partners. During its presidency of the Community last year, the United Kingdom prompted an initiative further to enhance this co-operation by ensuring the exchange of information and expertise so that, where abuse is detected, all states are able to respond to it.

Crime Statistics

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people with disabilities have been the victims of crime against *(a)* the person and *(b)* property in the London area during 1987.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available.

Mr. Trevor Monerville

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date the death occurred of Mr. Trevor Monerville, in respect of whose treatment by the police at Stoke Newington police station a complaint has been made by his father.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am glad to say that Mr. Monerville is alive.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements exist within his Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisation, for dealing with his responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Mr. Butcher: My Department's functions concern trade and industry located in Greater London, as in other parts of the country; but no unit of my Department, and none of my staff, is exclusively concerned with Greater London.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry with which Departments and non-departmental bodies his Department, and its related non-departmental public bodies has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Butcher: No record is kept of this information.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Mr. Butcher: No.

Imports

Mr. Lamble asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of imports of category 13 products, knitted knickers, pants and briefs, from China

in 1986 and comparable figures for 1985; what steps he proposes to take to restrain such imports in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Imports of category 13 products, knitted knickers, pants and briefs, from China amounted to 8,912,000 pieces, net of imports for inward processing, in 1986, against a comparable figure of 2,282,000 in 1985.

My Department is currently discussing the significance of these figures within the industry in the light of import trends generally and the impact on United Kingdom production.

Mr. Lambie asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give details of imports of category 5 products, sweaters, from Mauritius during 1986 and comparable figures for 1985; what steps he proposes to take to restrain such imports in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Imports of category 5 products, sweaters, from Mauritius in 1986 reached a total of 3,211,000 pieces. In 1985, category 5 imports were 2,412,000 pieces. My Department is currently examining the scope for action in conjunction with the Community.

Employee Inventors

Mr. Norris asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has reached a decision on whether any changes are needed to the legal rights of employee inventors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The 1983 Green Paper "Intellectual Property Rights and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9117) concluded that the rights of individual employee inventors should be strengthened along the lines of German law by giving them rights to take title in their inventions which are not being exploited by their employer. Following this recommendation, the Government commissioned an independent study into the German system and whether that system, in whole or in part; would be of economic benefit in the different legal and industrial environment of the United Kingdom. The White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9712) referred to the study and announced that its results were being examined.

Having considered the results of the study, and taking into account representations received from industry, patent professionals and other interested parties, the Government have concluded that no changes in the law should be made. There is little evidence that a system on German lines would bring any tangible economic benefits; yet the administrative burdens which would be imposed on industry and Government by the introduction of such a system in the United Kingdom would be substantial.

The Government believe that a more promising approach to the problem of unexploited in-house inventions is to give employers better incentives to identify marketable innovation. One example is the collaborative "spin-out" method, whereby private venture capital is provided for projects in which the parent company and employees each have part interests. Further studies of this and other aids to innovation are therefore to be made.

South Africa

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will report on how British companies have complied with the European Community's code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa during the 12 months period to 30 June 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: By 13 March 1987, 160 companies had submitted reports to the Department under the code of conduct. Copies of the reports, and of the Department's analysis and summary have, as in previous years, been placed in the Library of each House. These documents may also be inspected at the Department's library, at the British embassy in Pretoria, at the British consulate-general in Johannesburg, and at the British consulates in Cape Town and Durban.

The analysis and summary is the first since the introduction of the revised code of conduct was adopted by EC Foreign Ministers in November 1985. Reports were received from the overwhelming majority of British companies with interests in South Africa. Of those companies whose interests are known or believed technically to warrant a full report under the code, only two declined to submit returns. One of these has already sold its interests and the other intends to do so. In some respects the period was a transitional one, in that not all reports received were in the revised format and the restructuring of the code impairs comparison in many sections with previous years' reports.

The reporting period was again characterised by continued economic recession in which wage rates throughout the South African economy generally failed to keep pace with consumer price inflation. Against this background, the performance of British subsidiaries in reducing substantially the number of their black employees paid below the supplemented living level is notable. Over 96 per cent. are now paid above that level. There were indications of a growing commitment to education and community projects too.

The Government are grateful to companies for their continued efforts in reporting and urges them to comply fully with the code.

Enterprise Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, of the funds made available to the Royal Society of Arts, during Industry Year 1986, to publicise the importance of Enterprise Education *(a)* how much and *(b)* what proportion of the total amount was spent on (i) publicity materials in schools in the United Kingdom (ii) publicity materials in schools in Wales and (iii) publicity materials in the Welsh language.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Company Directors

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many company directors have been prosecuted and disqualified as a result of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Oils and Fats

Mrs. McCurley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the scope and nature of the proposed European Economic Community tax on oils and fats.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Potatoes

Sir Paul Hawkins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has determined the market prices for potatoes to apply in Great Britain for the 1987-88 crop year beginning on 1 July.

Mr. Gummer: Following consultations with the farmers unions I have decided to authorise the Potato Marketing Board to enter into pre-season contracts with producers to purchase up to 300,000 tonnes of potatoes over the months November 1987 to May 1988 at a scale of prices not to exceed an average of £53 per tonne. I have also agreed that the board may intervene directly on the market throughout the season where this will ensure support more cheaply than purchases under contract, provided that the total intervention does not exceed 500,000 tonnes. The target area for potato plantings in Great Britain, another important factor in market stability, was fixed last July at 156,500 hectares.

I have approved increases in the Potato Marketing Board's scale of direct intervention trigger prices for the period November to June inclusive to bring them into a more realistic relationship with the board's contract prices. I believe that placing increased emphasis on direct intervention will balance the effect of higher trigger prices and will thus avoid adding to the potential cost of market support. Overall, I believe that these arrangements will provide growers with a reasonable level of fall-back support in the event of surplus production arising in 1987-88. I shall be looking to producers themselves to ensure that our industry remains competitive by matching plantings as closely as possible to the target area set by the Government.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Thurnham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about milk quotas in 1987-88.

Mr. Jopling: As the House will already be aware, the Community agreed last year to the permanent reduction of milk quotas by 2 per cent. with effect from 1 April 1987. A Community outgoers scheme has been operating in the United Kingdom to obtain as much as possible of this quantity by voluntary means, subject to a 2 per cent. maximum in any purchaser area. This measure has achieved 10·78 per cent. of the target quantity in the United Kingdom as a whole.

For wholesale quotas, the balance of the 2 per cent. reduction required will be obtained by applying cuts in each purchaser area where the 2 per cent. reduction was not achieved through the outgoers scheme, resulting in a reduction in each producer's quota as at 1 April. The reduction factors to be applied are as follows:

	per cent.
England and Wales	1·89
Northern Ireland	1·30
Scottish MMB	1·42
Shetland	2·00
Other Scottish purchaser areas	Nil

For direct sales quota, the reduction factors will be as follows:

	per cent.
England and Wales	1·88
Northern Ireland	2·00
Scottish MMB	0·14
Shetland	2·00
Other Scottish areas	Nil

As a result of new arrangements agreed by the Agriculture Council last February, compensation for these compulsory reductions will be paid from Community funds, at the same rate as is payable under the outgoers scheme, that is 27·49p per litre spread over seven years.

The European Commission has made it clear to us that it disputes the legality of the present allocation of milk quotas to Northern Ireland and would initiate legal action against us if we did not change it. To meet this point a transfer of 30,000 tonnes of wholesale milk quota will be made from Great Britain to Northern Ireland in addition to the 20,600 tonnes transferred last autumn. This will bring the treatment of Northern Ireland producers with special needs more closely into line with that of producers elsewhere in the United Kingdom. We shall aim to obtain this quantity by voluntary means. I shall shortly be announcing details of a national outgoers scheme, but in order to ensure that the required quota is made available it will be necessary, pending the outcome of the scheme, to make a provisional reduction in quotas of about 0·3 per cent. from 1 April. I hope that the response to the national outgoers measure will enable this provisional reduction to be withdrawn. The rate of compensation under the national outgoers measure will be 27·49p-litre spread over seven years. To the extent that the provisional quota reduction needs to be made permanent, producers will be compensated on the same basis. To provide for this expenditure the cash limits on relevant Votes (Class IV, Vote 4 and Class XVI, Vote 2) will be increased and Supplementary Estimates will be presented to Parliament. The increases in expenditure will be contained within planned provision for programmes and will not involve a call on the Reserve.

Also arising from agreement within the Community, a 4 per cent. suspension will be imposed on wholesale quotas for 1987-88 and one of 5½ per cent. for 1988-89. For the 4 per cent. suspension in 1987-88 producers will receive compensation at a rate of 6·5p-litre, which represents almost double the average profit per litre for milk production.

A further permanent reduction of 1 per cent. of all quotas will need to be implemented with effect from 1 April 1988. As with the 2 per cent. cut, the industry will be offered the opportunity to surrender the necessary quota voluntarily through an outgoers scheme and compensation will be paid over seven years at 6 ecu-100 kg (27.49p-litre at current conversion rates). I shall be announcing further details as soon as possible, following consultations with industry organisations.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Tertiary Education

Mr. Merlyn Rees asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the local authorities where tertiary education has been approved by his Department.

Mr. Dunn: The following is the list of local education authorities whose proposals under sections 12 to 15 of the Education Act 1980 involving the establishment of tertiary colleges for all or part of the authority's area have been approved by my right hon. Friend or his predecessors.

*Bury (opening September 1987)
Cheshire
Dorset
Dudley
Durham
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
*Harrow (opening September 1987)
Kirklees (opening from September 1987)
Knowsley
Lancashire
Manchester
North Yorkshire
Oxfordshire
Sheffield (opening from 1988 to 1992)
South Tyneside (opening 1989)
Staffordshire
*Sunderland (opening 1990)
Wiltshire
Wolverhampton

*In authorities marked with an asterisk, and following the opening of tertiary colleges in these authorities, all county 16 to 19 provision will be in the form of tertiary colleges. The other listed LEAs offer county provision also in sixth forms and/or sixth form colleges. All the LEAs listed offer voluntary sector provision in school sixth forms and/or sixth form colleges.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been disbursed by the Science and Engineering Research Council teaching in companies scheme in each year since the scheme was introduced; how much has been disbursed to *(a)* individuals and *(b)* companies in Yorkshire and Humberside in each year since this scheme was introduced; how much is to be disbursed to individuals and companies in Yorkshire and Humberside under the council's latest allocation; what representations about this allocation he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Science and Engineering Research Council has been asked for this information. I shall reply as soon as possible.

GCSE

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to increase the level of funding for general certificate of secondary education subjects in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government are supporting the successful launch of the general certificate of secondary education with a massive injection of resources in the new financial year, building on the substantial sums already committed. In 1987-88 we are providing for spending in excess of £115 million to prepare teachers and to resource schools for the GCSE.

For the teachers, we have identified GCSE in-service training as a national priority and have provided for £15 million expenditure on this. We have given a further grant to the GCSE examining groups to fund the preparation of in-service training material. Moreover, the Government have planned for a continued improvement in the pupil-teacher ratio, partly in recognition of the demands of GCSE.

For the schools, the Government are providing for £100 million expenditure on GCSE. In particular, this is to pay for the books, equipment and materials required for GCSE courses, and to pay for additional technical and clerical staff who can provide valuable help and support for teachers. Included within this sum is the specific support of £10 million expenditure, through education support grant, for GCSE books and equipment.

We will continue to monitor closely the introduction of GCSE. We have already promised to continue special funding in later years. No other examination has been so well endowed on its introduction.

Soviet Union (British Students)

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to review his decision to reclassify the maintenance grant for British students studying in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary regulations, the Soviet Union will be reclassified as a high-cost country for the purposes of mandatory awards with effect from September 1987.

Mr. H. V. J. Whitby

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science for how long Mr. H. V. J. Whitby, a teacher at Hatch End high school, Harrow, has been suspended from teaching at the school; what are the reasons given by the local education authority; if written complaints made either by a pupil or members of the public will be made available to Mr. Whitby; and if he will initiate a full inquiry into the matter.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand from Harrow LEA that Mr. Whitby was placed on leave of absence on 15 July 1983, and since September 1984 has been on sick leave. The Department is in correspondence with Harrow about this case and about how the matter may be resolved.

Higher Education Colleges

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list alphabetically all the colleges in England providing higher education work with 50 per cent. or more of students on advanced courses, indication in which local education authority and British and European parliamentary constituencies they fall.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

WALES

Archaeological Remains

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to amend the powers local authorities in Wales have to prevent the destruction of archaeological remains of historic value.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no plans to alter such powers.

University of Wales

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will clarify what involvement his Department has in discussions relating to the future of the University of Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The University of Wales is an autonomous institution, operating under royal charter. The university and its constituent colleges receive the bulk of their funding from the Department of Education and Science acting on advice from the University Grants Committee. Within the limits set by the resources available to it the university enjoys academic freedom and is responsible for determining its own future without interference from any Department of State. While my right hon. Friend and I keep in close touch with representatives of the university, its future is a matter for the university itself to consider in conjunction with the UGC.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what financial assistance his Department gives towards the cost of teaching through the medium of the Welsh language at the University of Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department has no responsibility for the funding of undergraduate teaching through the medium of Welsh at the University of Wales. Resources for this purpose are provided through the University Grants Committee's recurrent grant allocations.

The Department grant-aids the extra mural departments of the University of Wales' constituent colleges, whose programmes of liberal adult studies include some courses provided through the medium of Welsh. It is not possible to say what proportion of the £680,000 allocated to the EMD for the 1986-87 academic year will be used to fund Welsh medium courses.

Additionally, under section 21 of the Education Act 1980, £69,250 has been made available in 1986-87 mainly for activities related to the teaching of Welsh to adults.

Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the motorway and trunk road construction contracts with a works cost of £1 million or more which his Department intends to award in 1987-88, showing in each case the total value of the contract and the expenditure likely to be incurred in that year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, the completion of engineering design and the availability of resources we hope to let contracts for the following major schemes in 1987-88.

A55	Penmaenmawr bypass
A483	Newbridge bypass and Whitehurst Link
A55	Northop bypass
A470	Llanidloes bypass
A55	Llanfairfechan bypass
A48	Nant-y-Caws—Coed Hirion bypass.

It is not possible to give the cost of the contracts or the expenditure to be incurred in 1987-88, since this will depend on the value of the accepted tenders and the contractors' programmes of work.

Welsh Arts Council

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the membership of the Welsh Arts Council for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is contained in the relevant annual reports of the Arts Council of Great Britain, copies of which are in the Libraries of the House.

MSC (Publications)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales which of the publications which have been circulated to schools in Wales by the Manpower Services Commission have been circulated *(a)* in a bilingual Welsh-English form, *(b)* with separate Welsh and English versions, *(c)* in Welsh only and *(d)* in English only.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Manpower Services Commission does not as a matter of course circulate publications to schools. The following, which relate to the needs of young people in Wales, are available on request in both English and Welsh language editions.

TFS L1	Training for Skills
TFS L1(W)	Hyfforddiant Sgiliau
TFS L2	What parents should know
TFS L2(W)	Cyngor i rieni
TFS L4	Careers Advisers and Teachers: What you should know
TFS L4(W)	Cyngor i athrawon gyrfaoedd ac ymgyn/ghorwyr
TFS L5	What school leavers should know
TFS L5(W)	Cyngor i'r rhai sy'n gadael yr ysgol
TFS L10	On the right track
TFS L10(W)	Ar y Ffordd iawn

One other publication, "Action Special 1986", which supported the joint MSC-BBC1 campaign in 1986, is available in English only.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the proposed relationship between the new Welsh language education development committee and the Manpower Services Commission in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is for the new committee to develop such relationships with other bodies as will help it to discharge its role.

Higher Education Colleges

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list alphabetically all the colleges in Wales providing higher education work with 50 per cent. or more of students on advanced courses, indicating under which local education authority and British and European parliamentary constituency they fall.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

Colleges with 50 per cent. or more of student enrolments on advanced courses, as at November 1985	*Local Authority*	*Constituency*	
		Parliamentary	*European Assembly*
Bangor Normal College	Gwynedd	Conwy	North Wales
College of Librarianship, Wales	Dyfed	Ceredigion and Pembroke North	Mid and West Wales
Gwent College of Higher Education	Gwent	Newport West	South East Wales
Polytechnic of Wales	Mid Glamorgan	Pontypridd	South Wales
South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	South Glamorgan	Cardiff Central	South Wales
Trinity College	Dyfed	Carmarthen	Mid and West Wales
Welsh College of Music and Drama	South Glamorgan	Cardiff Central	South Wales
West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education	West Glamorgan	Swansea West	South Wales

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide the latest available figure for regional development grant expenditure in Wales for the year 1986-87, and an estimate of what he expects the final figure to be.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The latest available figure for regional development grant expenditure in Wales for 1986-87 is £86·89 million. The final figure is expected to be in the region of £89 million.

DEFENCE

Select Committees

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the past five Sessions those occasions when *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* senior civil servants and *(c)* military personnel, have appeared before Select Committees other than the Defence Committee or the Public Accounts Committee; and to which Select Committees memoranda have been submitted.

Mr. Freeman: The details for the past five complete parliamentary sessions are as follows:

Select Committee	*Ministers*	*Senior Civil Servants*	*Military Personnel*
1981-82			
2 December 1981			
Treasury and Civil Service Committee	—	4	1
22 February 1982			
Treasury and Civil Service Committee	—	2	—
1982-83			
9 November 1982			
Select Committee on Procedure (Finance)	—	3	—
7 February 1983			
Foreign Affairs Committee	—	—	1
1983-84			
20 June 1984			
Treasury and Civil Service Committee	—	1	—
1984-85			
7 November 1984			
Foreign Affairs Committee	1	—	—
27 November 1984			
Education, Science and Arts Committee	—	1	—
19 June 1985			
Scottish Affairs Committee	—	2	3
1985-86			
22 January 1986			
Armed Forces Bill Committee	—	5	8
29 January 1986			
Armed Forces Bill Committee	—	5	6
5 February 1986			
Armed Forces Bill Committee	—	7	6
12 February 1986			
Armed Forces Bill Committee	—	6	9

My Department has submitted memoranda to Select Committees other than to the Defence Committee or the Public Accounts Committee as follows:

1981-82	Treasury and Civil Service Committee
1982-83	Foreign Affairs Committee
	Select Committee on Procedure (Finance)
1983-84	Treasury and Civil Service Committee
1984-85	Foreign Affairs Committee
	Scottish Affairs Committee
	Environment Committee
1985-86	Treasury and Civil Service Committee
	Environment Committee

Departmental Legislation

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the past five Sessions those Acts of Parliament sponsored by his Department and those in which his Department has been substantially and indirectly involved.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

1981-82	Nil
1982-83	Reserve Forces Act 1982
1983-84	Ordnance Factories and Military Services Act 1984
1984-85	Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985
1985-86	Armed Forces Act 1986
	Dockyard Services Act 1986
	Protection of Military Remains Act 1986

In addition, during the current session (1986-87), the Ministry of Defence has sponsored the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987.

Trident Missile

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what nuclear tests (i) have been carried out and (ii) are

proposed, in respect of Trident; whether Her Majesty's Government intend to rely on United States tests or to carry out their own; and when it is anticipated that such tests will be completed.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Joint United Kingdom/United States nuclear weapons tests are carried out at the Nevada test site as part of the continuing development of our nuclear warheads and in order to maintain the effectiveness of the UK's nuclear capability. All tests are announced at the time but it would not be in the national interest to identify the specific purpose of each test.

Empty Properties

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those local authorities in whose areas his Department has empty properties; how many empty properties have been offered to local authorities or housing associations on a short-term basis; and how many have been taken up in each authority.

Mr. Freeman: Records are not maintained of the local authorities in whose areas the MOD has empty properties or of the number of properties which have been offered to local authorities or housing associations on a short-term basis. The following properties are currently leased to local authorities and housing associations:

Local authority/housing association	*Number of properties*
Plymouth City Council	50
Portsmouth City Council	24
Gosport Borough Council	172
North Wiltshire District Council	57
Exeter City Council	17
Kennet District Council	48
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	9
London Borough of Greenwich	21
West Lothian Council	8
Scottish Special Housing Association	7

Mr. Sharif

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Mr. Sharif of London E.17, who committed suicide in Bristol on 28 October 1986, had been engaged in work of a classified nature for his Department; during what period Mr. Shariff worked for defence contractors on work financed by public funds; and if his work is subject to the current investigations by Ministry of Defence police at Marconi in Portsmouth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Mr. Sharif was employed by Marconi Defence Systems plc from 24 June 1985 until his death on 28 October 1986. His work did not entail access to information classified above restricted. He was employed at Stanmore, not Portsmouth.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy on the future role of dual-capable United States Air Force F111 aircraft based in Britain in the light of the proposal by the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Air Command that these aircraft should be converted to carry air-launched cruise missiles in the event of all intermediate range nuclear force missiles being removed from Europe;

(2) what consideration is being given by his Department to the role of nuclear-armed air-launched cruise or stand-off missiles in the event of the complete removal of intermediate range nuclear force missiles from Europe.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on changes in the total number of Soviet troops deployed in eastern Europe since 1979.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

United States Forces

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the locations of sites earmarked for storage of pre-positioned medical stocks for United States forces;

(2) if he will list the Royal Air Force bases currently being acquired by the United States Air Force for use as contingency hospitals.

Mr. Freeman: United States forces pre-positioned medical supplies and contingency hospitals exist at the following locations:

RAF Little Rissington, RAF Nocton Hall, RAF Chessington, RAF Bicester, RAF Feltwell, RAF Upwood

In addition permission has been given for the establishment of pre-positioned supplies and contingency hospitals at the following locations:

RAF Locking, RAF Condor (Arbroath), Winston Barracks (Lanark), Ritchie Barracks (Kirknewton)

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Oxfam

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received any representations regarding the Oxfam meeting on 28 February in Friary Hall, Crawley, where it agreed to distribute badges and leaflets throughout the United Kingdom in support of the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has received representations from three hon. Members about the Oxfam meeting on 28 February.

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have held any discussions with the charity Oxfam concerning its activities in Namibia/South West Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We have exchanged views on the situation in Namibia with Oxfam from time to time. We do not, however, provide funding for Oxfam's activities in Namibia and have not therefore had occasion to discuss those activities in detail with Oxfam.

Arms Control

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Her Majesty's Government's policy is on full and free on-site inspection of military sites in Britain in order to verify an intermediate range nuclear force zero option.

Mr. Renton: A rigorous verification regime, including on-site inspection, will be an essential part of any INF agreement. The precise details have yet to be agreed. We are prepared to play our part as necessary.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the current round of talks in Geneva on intermediate range nuclear force includes any consideration of dual-capable aircraft.

Mr. Renton: The current INF negotiations at Geneva concern land-based missiles. Dual-capable aircraft are not included.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had, during his recent visit to Hungary, on the potential for reciprocal measures of arms control and disarmanent by the United Kingdom and Hungary.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend had useful discussions with members of the Hungarian Government on a wide range of arms control and disarmament issues. The detailed content of those talks is confidential between our two Governments.

Soviet Troop Withdrawals

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on unilateral Soviet troop withdrawals from eastern Europe.

Mr. Renton: There has been speculation in the British press about the possibility of Soviet troop withdrawals from eastern Europe. The Soviet Union has made no statement on any such withdrawal.

Norwegian Foreign Minister

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the newly appointed Norwegian Foreign Minister in advance of the forthcoming North Atlantic Council meeting.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet Mr. Stoltenberg before the North Atlantic Council meeting.

THE ARTS

Welsh Arts Council

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list the grants allocated to the Welsh Arts Council in each year since 1979, at both current and 1987 prices.

Mr. Luce: The information requested is as follows:

Cash prices

	Grants from:		
	Arts Council of Great Britain	*British Film Institute*	*Crafts Council*
	£	£	£
1979-80	4,325,000	38,000	46,500
1980-81	4,900,000	35,000	52,000
1981-82	5,483,000	39,000	57,000
1982-83	5,987,000	44,850	61,500
1983-84	6,517,000	46,820	65,500
1984-85	6,918,000	46,820	68,500
1985-86	7,139,450	48,225	71,000
1986-87	7,610,000	48,500	73,000
1987-88	7,880,000	50,000	75,000

1987 prices

	Grants from:		
	Arts Council of Great Britain	*British Film Institute*	*Crafts Council*
	£	£	£
1979-80	7,205,768	63,311	77,472
1980-81	6,881,929	49,157	73,033
1981-82	7,011,683	49,873	72,892
1982-83	7,138,767	53,478	73,331
1983-84	7,439,085	53,445	74,768
1984-85	7,569,732	51,231	74,953
1985-86	7,353,634	49,672	73,130
1986-87	7,610,000	48,500	73,000
1987-88	7,595,145	48,193	72,289

EMPLOYMENT

Heart of England Tourist Board

12. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the amount of income that has been generated by tourism in the Heart of England tourist board area in each year since 1978.

Mr. Trippier: Tourist spending in the Heart of England tourist board area increased from £205 million in 1978 to £545 million in 1985. This is a rise in real terms of 40 per cent.

A table giving full information has been placed in the Library.

39. **Mr. Bevan** asked the Paymaster General whether he will list information available to him on the principal tourist attractions and facilities constructed or substantially renovated in the Heart of England tourist board area in each year since 1978.

Mr. David Trippier: Information about the full range of private and public sector investment which has been carried out in tourist attractions and facilities in the region since 1978 is not available. However since 1982-83, when the Heart of England tourist board area became fully eligible for assistance under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969, the English Tourist Board has offered assistance totalling £1·2 million for 11 projects in the region where the total capital cost of the work exceeded £500,000.

The projects are as follows:

Ironbridge Gorge Museum/Blists Hill
National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull
Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham
Ettingtom Park Hotel, Stratford Upon Avon
Park House Hotel, Shifnal
Arden Restaurant and Motel, Solihull
Tara Hotel, Upton St. Leonards
Birmingham Botanic Gardens
Patshull Park Hotel, Pattingham
Tewdesbury Hall Hotel, Twyning
Aylesbury House, Hockley Heath

Racial and Sexual Discrimination

13. **Mrs. Shields** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on measures to prevent racial or sexual discrimination in Manpower Services Commission sponsored training schemes.

Mr. Lee: All training programmes sponsored by the MSC are equal opportunity programmes, open to all those who are eligible. Regardless of race, sex, religion or

disability. All MSC contracts with training providers draw attention to the legislation covering race and sex discrimination and require them to comply with it. The MSC monitors its equal opportunities policy closely and underpins it with a wide range of administrative provisions.

Labour Mobility

14. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement concerning the outcome of Government schemes to help the unemployed move in order to find jobs.

Mr. Lee: During the year ended 31 March 1986 3,300 unemployed people were helped by the employment transfer scheme. We discontinued this scheme in April 1986 as it was not a cost effective way of helping people into jobs. The travel to interview scheme which helps unemployed people with the costs of attending job interviews held beyond normal daily travelling distance of their home, is now helping over 2,000 people each month compared with 330 who were helped by its predecessor the job search scheme.

Disabled People

15. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Paymaster General how many firms with over 20 workers are failing to fulfil their statutory quota of employing 3 per cent. of their labour force from registered disabled people; and how many of these firms have been allocated permits exempting them from the quota.

Mr. Lee: On 1 June 1986, the latest date for which information is available, 24,643 employers with twenty or more workers were not employing their full quota of registered disabled people. 18,840 of these had, during the previous twelve months, been granted permits authorising the engagement of other than registered disabled people.

London (Tourism)

16. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Paymaster General what action he proposes to take to encourage the dispersal of tourism from London in the light of the report "Tourism in London: Resident Opinion Survey by the London Tourist Board and Convention Bureau", a copy of which has been forwarded to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I share the view of the large majority of residents questioned who felt that tourists should be encouraged to spend time in other parts of Britain as well as London. It is a priority of the British Tourist Authority and English tourist board to encourage the wider dispersal of visitors throughout the country.

Community Programme

17. **Mr. Alton** asked the Paymaster General if he will review the procedures which prevent applicants who have been unemployed for less than six months from joining the community programme.

Mr. Lee: No. The community programme is specially designed for long term unemployed people who have greater difficulty than those unemployed for a shorter period in getting into work.

49. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the future development of the community programme.

Mr. Lee: In 1987-88 the community programme will provide jobs for some 300,000 people, the same level as in 1986-87. The emphasis of the programme will be on improving the quality of projects and provision will be focused more closely on priorities such as inner cities, enterprise, and national initiatives live crime prevention, energy efficiency and tourism.

Job Creation

18. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Paymaster General how many full-time jobs at average earnings have been created by Her Majesty's Government's measures in the last four years.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to estimate the number of full-time jobs at average pay created as a result of Government measures.

Yeovil

19. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the trends in unemployment in the Yeovil travel-to-work area; and if he will give the latest figures.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment in the Yeovil travel-to-work area is estimated to have fallen by about 200, or 5 per cent., over the last year.

On 12 February 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Yeovil travel-to-work area was 3,660, representing 9·1 per cent. of employees in employment plus the unemployed.

Gangmasters (Employees)

20. **Mr. Freud** asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the number of persons in *(a)* the Wisbech and *(b)* the March area who are employed by gangmasters.

Mr. Lee: I have no such information but there is little doubt that the use of gang labour has increased in recent years.

Labour Statistics

21. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: On 12 February, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,225,809.

24. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the population between the ages of 18 and 60 years are now in full-time employment.

Mr. Lee: The information is not readily available in the exact form requested.

Preliminary Labour Force Survey results for the spring of 1986 estimate that 54·0 per cent. of all persons aged 16 and under 60 were in full-time employment (including Government Schemes) in Great Britain.

30. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest figure for unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

46. **Mr. Parry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Lee: On 12 February 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,225,809.

37. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the likely numbers of people seeking employment in the United Kingdom in the next five years; and if he will make a statement about relevant demographic trends.

Mr. Lee: Taking account of the latest population projections and of information on activity rates from the 1986 "Labour Force Survey", my Department projects that the civilian labour force in Great Britain will rise by about 500,000 between June 1986 and June 1991. The projected rate of growth is considerably faster at the beginning of this period than at the end. More detailed figures and explanations will be published in an article which is scheduled for the May issue of *Employment Gazette*.

The demographic trends of most relevance to the size of the labour force are those in the numbers of entries to and exits from the population of working age. Reflecting the pattern of the baby boom 16 years earlier, the number of entrants has reduced somewhat from its peak in 1981 and further substantial reductions are projected. The number of exits, mostly people reaching retirement age, is projected to be relatively constant. As a result the rate of increase in the population of working age is projected to decline each year, from 176,000 in 1986-87 to zero in 1990-91.

45. **Mr. Watts** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a further statement on the trends of unemployment and employment.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment has fallen continuously for the past seven months and is now 150,000 below the level of last July. Employment has risen every quarter since spring 1983. There were 1,040,000 more people in work in September 1986 than there were in March 1983.

50. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of men aged 55 to 65 years were unemployed at the last available date; and what were the comparable figures in 1979 and 1983.

Mr. Lee: On 8 January 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, the rates of unemployment, expressed as a percentage of the working population for males in the 55 to 59 and 60 and over age groups in the United Kingdom were 17·6 per cent. and 7·5 per cent. respectively. The corresponding unemployment rates for January 1983 were 15·0 per cent. and 22·1 per cent. This comparison is affected by changes in coverage of the data, in particular the effect of the 1983 Budget measures for men over 60. Unemployment rates by age, expressed a percentage of the working population are available only from January 1983.

The published figures for January 1979 related to unemployed registrants expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed and these were 5·5 per cent. and 12·0 per cent. in the respective age groups.

52. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the total unemployed are aged 25 years or less; and what initiatives the Government are pursuing in London in particular in order to provide full-time employment at average rates of pay for those affected.

Mr. Lee: On 8 January 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available, 34·4 per cent. of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom were aged under 25 years.

All of the employment, training and enterprise measures run by my Department and the Manpower Services Commission are part of a wider strategy for encouraging enterprise and employment in London and elsewhere.

58. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for more than 12 months at the latest available date; and what percentage of the total unemployed this represents.

Mr. Lee: On 8 January 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for over 12 months was 1,334,430 which represents 40·5 per cent. of the total.

60. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Paymaster General if he will give the numbers of people out of work in the Wakefield travel-to-work area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: On 12 February 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the Wakefield and Dewsbury travel-to-work area was 17,132.

Basildon

22. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General if he will list the figures for the latest numbers of unemployed in Basildon.

Mr. Lee: On 12 February 1987, there were 8,406 unemployed claimants in the Basildon local authority district.

"Trade Unions and their Members"

23. **Mr. Madel** asked the Paymaster General how many representations he has received concerning his Green Paper "Trade Unions and their Members"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: So far I have received 22 representations.

Entrepreneurs (Business Space)

25. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received concerning the availability of affordable small unit business space for professional entrepreneurs.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my earlier reply of 25 March at column *169*.

Industrial Training Board (Levies)

26. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of industrial training board levies have to be collected by issuing court proceedings.

Mr. Trippier: Precise information is not readily available, but I am advised that the total amount of levy income collected by industrial training boards as a result of beginning court proceedings is small.

Restart

27. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been called for interview under restart to date; and what percentage have gone on to receive full-time employment as a result.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: By 12 February 1987, 1,291,038 people had been called for interview of whom 1,003,644, had been interviewed. We have no means of knowing precisely what proportion have gone on to full time employment as a result.

36. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been submitted for a job or training placement under restart; and what percentage were actually offered a job or placement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: By 12 February 1,003,644 people had been interviewed under the restart programme. We have no means of knowing precisely how many have since found jobs or other opportunities, such as training, which might lead to employment. However, 74 per cent. of participants agreed to pursue the offer made to them at their restart interview.

Budget

28. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Paymaster General what effect he expects the Budget to have on average levels of unemployment, and disparities between the nations and regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Budget will help to sustain the pace of economic growth enterprise and employment creation throughout the United Kingdom.

North-West (Job Creation)

29. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Paymaster General how many new jobs have been created in the north-west region since 1983.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses.

Between June 1983 and June 1986 there was a net increase of 4,000 in the civilian employed labour force (which is the sum of employees in employment plus the self-employed) in the north-west region. This is the result of a decrease of employees in employment of 39,000 and an increase in the number of self-employed of 43,000.

Job Training Scheme

31. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Paymaster General what progress is being made in establishing the job training scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The new job training scheme is already operating in the pilot areas. We are well advanced with our plans to make the scheme available in all areas of the country from early April. The pilots have shown that the training offered is clearly attractive to long term unemployed people and there has been no shortage of training organisations coming forward to operate the scheme.

Job Clubs Programme

32. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Paymaster General if he has been able to assess the effects on local employment figures from the job clubs programme since the scheme was launched last year.

Mr. Lee: Job clubs have clearly been successful in helping a large number of long term unemployed people to find work.

In the period between November 1984 when the first Job club was opened, and 6 March 1987 (the latest date for which statistics are available) 20,606 people have been helped. Of these 12,312 (60 per cent.) have gone into jobs and a further 2,701 (13 per cent.) found temporary work through the community programme or entered a training programme or started a business under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Northern Region (Job Creation)

33. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Paymaster General what is the success rate of small firms in the creation of jobs after one, two and five years, respectively, in the northern region.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Tourist Development Grant Scheme

34. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Paymaster General whether he will estimate how many direct jobs will be created via projects aided under the tourist development grant scheme in the current financial year.

Mr. Trippier: In the current financial year assistance under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 has been offered by the English Tourist Board to 630 projects. The board estimates that over 2,800 jobs will be created directly in these projects as a result.

YTS

35. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Paymaster General how many people are presently engaged in the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: On 28 February 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were around 328,000 people in training on YTS in Great Britain.

Black Economy

38. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the number of people working in the black economy.

Mr. Trippier: Because of the nature of the black economy it is impossible to estimate the number of people working in it.

Tourism

40. **Mr. Cockeram** asked the Paymaster General what assessment he has made of the implications for the United Kingdom travel industry of participation in computerised travel and hotel reservations systems.

Mr. Trippier: The effective use of new technology can play an important part in ensuring that the United Kingdom travel industry remains competitive. A number

of computerised reservation systems are already in operation in the United Kingdom. It is important for the industry to co-ordinate a strategy for the development and integration of computerised reservations systems and I am pleased to see that an industry action group, with the provisional title of Access UK, has recently been established for this purpose. The British tourist authority will be providing initial secretarial support and assistance to the group.

41. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of en-suite bathrooms added to hotel and guest house bedrooms in England in each year since 1978.

Mr. Trippier: It would be possible to provide compresensive information only at disproportionate cost. But from April 1983 to date a total of 1,159 projects in the serviced accommodation sector have been offered assistance totalling over £24 million by the English Tourist Board under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. A high proportion of these projects has involved the provision of en-suite bathrooms.

43. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the number of tourists visiting each regional tourist board in each year since 1978, both as a whole and expressed as a percentage of the total national figure.

48. **Mr. Cash** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the amount of money spent in each tourist board area by holiday makers and business visitors.

51. **Sir Peter Blaker** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the amount of income that has been generated by tourism in the north-west tourist board area in each year since 1978.

53. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the amount of income that has been generated by tourism in the East Anglia tourist board area in each year since 1978.

54. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the amount of income that has been generated by tourism in the West Country tourist board area in each year since 1978.

55. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the amount of income that has been generated by tourism in the Thames and Chiltern tourist board area in each year since 1978.

Mr. Trippier: A table giving this information has been placed in the Library.

56. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of hotels operating in each of the tourist board regions in each year since 1978 to date.

Mr. Trippier: No comprehensive information is available on the numbers of hotels in tourist board regions.

62. **Mr. Gale** asked the Paymaster General whether he will estimate the amount of investment in tourism that took place in 1986 in the area covered by the South East England tourist board.

Mr. Trippier: No comprehensive information on total tourism development in a particular region is available. However, a recent ETB survey of major projects suggested that in the last six months of 1986 at least £135 million worth of tourism and leisure developments was opened or under construction in the South East England tourist board area.

Mr. Bevan asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of new attractions constructed in each of the tourist board regions in each year since 1978, giving in each case details of the principal such attractions.

Mr. Trippier: As my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) stated in his reply to my hon. Friend on 19 March at column 579, no comprehensive information on the number of new attractions constructed in each of the tourist board regions is available.

Small Businesses

42. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Paymaster General what plans his Department has for promoting the growth of small businesses in the regions.

Mr. Trippier: Small businesses in the regions are able to benefit from a wide range of assistance, details of which were set out in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Brown) on 9 February at columns *56-60*.

In addition to that assistance, the Department of Trade and Industry offers help to businesses of all sizes in the assisted areas. Regional selective assistance is available in the intermediate areas; and both regional selective assistance and regional development grants are available in the development areas. The assistance takes the form of grants which are available for manufacturing or service projects which provide new capital assets and create or safeguard employment in the relevant areas.

Manufacturing Industry

44. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Paymaster General what was the net loss or gain of manufacturing jobs in Britain and the north-west region respectively in 1986.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Between December 1985 and December 1986 there was a net decrease of 123,000 in the number of employees in employment in manufacturing industries in Great Britain. In the same period there was a comparable decrease of 17,000 in the north-west region.

Some of the decrease in the figures will be the result of the re-classification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, computer services and road haulage, previously done by manufacturer's own employees and now done by sub-contractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment.

Between December 1985 and December 1986 there was a net increase of 7,000 in the number of self employed in manufacturing industries in Great Britain. Comparable regional figures are not available.

Job Clubs

47. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Paymaster General how many job clubs have been established in the Greater London area; and how many he expects to be in operation in the same area by the end of the year.

Mr. Lee: There will be 120 job clubs open in Greater London by 31 March 1987, as part of the national

expansion to 1,000 job clubs. An examination of the need to expand the number of job clubs beyond 1,000 is now under way.

Regional Employment

57. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on regional differences in employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Employment in the regions varies according to the industrial structure and the success with which industries have adapted to change. I am encouraged by the latest figures published earlier this month which show that employment levels are rising and unemployment falling across all regions.

Package Holidays

59. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Paymaster General what information he has on the marketing of package holidays in Britain through United Kingdom travel agents.

Mr. Trippier: Detailed statistics are not available. However, I understand that a growing number of domestic companies are developing holiday packages based in Britain and marketing them through travel agents.

Budget Proposals

61. **Mr. Latham** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the representations which he has received regarding the effect of the Budget upon the level of unemployment.

Mr. Lee: Since the Budget Statement on 17 March I have received no representations regarding the effects of the Budget upon the level of unemployment.

Self-Employed Persons

Mr. Bruce asked the Paymaster General if he will list each constituency in the United Kingdom in order of the proportion of the self employed according to the most recent information or census.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information comes from the 1981 census of population and is shown in the following table.

Self employed persons as a percentage of all persons in employment in parliamentary constituencies Great Britain

Parliamentary constituencies	*Per cent.*
Ceredigio and Pembroke North	28·86
Montgomery	26·90
North Cornwall	26·48
Carmarthen	26·20
Brecon and Radnor	25·48
St. Ives	25·10
Torridge and West Devon	25·04
Meirionnydd Nant Conwy	23·96
North Devon	23·02
Penrith and the Borders	22·04
Leominster	21·85
South Hams	21·68
Tiverton	21·17
Bexhill and Battle	20·43
Torbay	20·26
Honiton	20·25
Caernarfon	19·72
Westmorland and Lonsdale	19·57
Hendon South	19·40
South East Cornwall	19·33
Skipton and Ripon	19·23
East Lindsey	19·09
West Dorset	18·85
Teignbridge	18·35
Orkney and Shetland	18·01
Ludlow	17·94
Argyl and Bute	17·90
Truro	17·66
Clwyd South West	17·52
New Forest	17·48
Wealden	17·43
Western Isles	17·42
Somerton and Frome	17·35
Blackpool South	17·30
North Norfolk	17·23
Pembroke	17·20
Blackpool North	17·18
North Dorset	16·80
Bournemouth East	16·72
Wells	16·71
Scarborough	16·53
North Shropshire	16·43
Falmouth and Camborne	16·39
Hampstead and Highgate	16·38
Richmond	16·30
Chichester	15·88
Ryedale	15·82
Ynys Mon	15·69
Clwyd North West	15·59
Conwy	15·55
Isle of Wight	15·54
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	15·46
Chelsea	15·30
Morecambe and Lunesdale	15·29
Christchurch	15·26
Bridlington	15·23
Saffron Walden	15·19
North Thanet	15·18
Hastings and Rye	15·16
North East Cambridgeshire	15·08
Enfield Southgate	15·03
Holland with Boston	15·02
Bridgwater	14·91
Monmouth	14·82
Hexham	14·76
Wanstead and Woodford	14·64
Banff and Buchan	14·52
Hereford	14·49
West Derbyshire	14·48
Cirencester and Tewkesbury	14·37
Ribble Valley	14·35
South Norfolk	14·31
Stratford-on-Avon	14·28
Bournemouth West	14·20
Fylde	14·14
Arundel	14·11
Booth Ferry	14·09
Finchley	14·08
Mid Norfolk	14·06
South Worcestershire	13·99
Chipping Barnet	13·98
Berwick-upon-Tweed	13·92
Lewes	13·91
Kensington	13·89
Brent North	13·88
Caithness and Sutherland	13·82
Hove	13·80
South West Norfolk	13·76
Esher	13·76
Richmond-upon-Thames and Barnes	13·70
Harwich	13·65
Buckingham	13·61
South East Cambridgeshire	13·45
The City of London and Westminster	13·45
Taunton	13·45
Wyre	13·38
Mole Valley	13·31
Staffordshire Moorlands	13·27
Stamford and Spalding	13·22
Great Yarmouth	13·22
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	13·21
North Tayside	13·19
South Dorset	13·18
Henley	13·13
Gainsborough and Horncastle	13·12
Weston-Super-Mare	13·10
Tunbridge Wells	13·09
Brighton Pavilion	13·06
Folkestone and Hythe	13·02
Hendon North	12·99
Westminster North	12·96
Lancaster	12·91
Eastbourne	12·91
Suffolk Coastal	12·84
Southport	12·80
South Thanet	12·79
Daventry	12·76
South Colchester and Maldon	12·71
South Suffolk	12·68
Macclesfield	12·66
South West Surrey	12·66
North West Norfolk	12·65
Shoreham	12·64
Gordon	12·59
East Surrey	12·58
Ashford	12·46
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	12·42
Sevenoaks	12·33
Beaconsfield	12·33
Brighton Kemptown	12·31
Horsham	12·29
Epping Forest	12·29
Stroud	12·27
West Gloucestershire	12·25
North Wiltshire	12·25
Central Suffolk	12·23
Harrow East	12·19
Hornsey and Wood Green	12·13

Parliamentary constituencies	Per cent.
Poole	11·97
Leeds North East	11·96
Southend West	11·95
High Peak	11·93
Worthing	11·88
Delyn	11·82
Harrogate	11·79
Yeovil	11·78
North East Fife	11·68
Woodspring	11·66
Dumfries	11·66
East Hampshire	11·65
Moray	11·59
Rutland and Melton	11·55
Chesham and Amersham	11·51
Witney	11·49
Canterbury	11·47
Southend East	11·43
Bury South	11·42
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	11·36
West Lancashire	11·30
Tatton	11·28
Newbury	11·21
Winchester	11·20
Selby	11·19
Grantham	11·14
Chertsey and Walton	11·13
Shrewsbury and Atcham	11·07
Salisbury	11·06
Littleborough and Saddleworth	11·04
Devizes	10·93
North Colchester	10·92
South Staffordshire	10·92
Eddisbury	10·91
Fulham	10·91
Broxbourne	10·86
Kincardine and Deeside	10·85
Brentwood and Ongar	10·82
North West Hampshire	10·80
South West Hertfordshire	10·78
Guildford	10·78
Gower	10·76
Eastwood	10·76
Waveney	10·73
Perth and Kinross	10·72
Altrincham and Sale	10·70
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	10·70
Rossendale and Darwen	10·68
Rochford	10·68
Kingston-upon-Thames	10·68
South West Cambridgeshire	10·68
Ilford North	10·67
Holborn and St. Pancras	10·67
Cheadle	10·66
Wimbledon	10·65
Congleton	10·64
Pendle	10·63
Westbury	10·63
Workington	10·61
Calder Valley	10·60
Bristol West	10·59
Harborough	10·56
Castle Point	10·54
Ealing Acton	10·53
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	10·52
Ravensbourne	10·51
Huntingdon	10·50
Wantage	10·47
Windsor and Maidenhead	10·45
Keighley	10·45
Rushcliffe	10·45
Ilford South	10·37
Twickenham	10·37
Chislehurst	10·34
Hazel Grove	10·30
Hertsmere	10·30
Mid Bedfordshire	10·29

Parliamentary constituencies	Per cent.
Bromsgrove	10·28
Brent East	10·27
Chingford	10·21
Chorley	10·19
Fareham	10·15
Ribby	10·11
Banbury	10·08
Harrow West	10·06
Hertford and Stortford	10·05
Croydon South	10·04
Stirling	10·04
North West Surrey	10·03
Sheffield Hallam	10·03
Epsom and Ewell	10·02
Reigate	10·01
Kettering	10·01
Mid Sussex	10·00
Newark	9·94
Bury St. Edmunds	9·94
Beverley	9·92
Wrexham	9·89
Bolton West	9·84
Shipley	9·81
Braintree	9·79
Bethnal Green and Stepney	9·77
Edmonton	9·74
Bury North	9·73
Northavon	9·71
Sutton and Cheam	9·71
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	9·71
Bosworth	9·70
Vale of Glamorgan	9·70
Cunninghame North	9·69
Hyndburn	9·67
Putney	9·66
Romford	9·64
Bath	9·63
Wycombe	9·56
Sutton Coldfield	9·56
Islington South and Finsbury	9·54
Beckenham	9·53
Tonbridge and Malling	9·49
Brigg and Cleethorpes	9·46
Streatham	9·46
Wansdyke	9·43
Brentford and Isleworth	9·40
Maidstone	9·40
Ruislip-Northwood	9·33
Plymouth Drake	9·32
Rochdale	9·31
East Berkshire	9·28
Aylesbury	9·27
Wolverhampton South West	9·18
Mid Staffordshire	9·14
Wellingborough	9·11
Stafford	9·11
Woking	9·10
Dewsbury	9·10
Clydesdale	9·08
Wyre Forest	9·08
Birmingham Edgbaston	9·07
Colne Valley	9·05
Worcester	9·00
Surbiton	8·99
North West Durham	8·99
Dulwich	8·99
Pudsey	8·97
Burton	8·96
Islington North	8·93
North East Derbyshire	8·92
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	8·92
Northampton South	8·91
Battersea	8·91
Faversham	8·89
Wirral West	8·89
Old Bexley and Sidcup	8·87
Stockport	8·87

Parliamentary constituencies	Per cent.
Portsmouth South	8·85
Wokingham	8·85
Llanelli	8·82
Enfield North	8·82
Bishop Auckland	8·81
Elmet	8·80
St. Albans	8·80
Dover	8·76
Cardiff Central	8·73
Corby	8·72
Bexley and Sidcup	8·69
Manchester Withington	8·66
Carshalton and Wallington	8·66
Hammersmith	8·66
North West Leicestershire	8·65
Tooting	8·64
Stalybridge and Hyde	8·63
Crewe and Nantwich	8·61
Reading East	8·60
Havant	8·59
Billericay	8·58
Leeds North West	8·58
Blackburn	8·57
South West Bedfordshire	8·57
Croydon North East	8·57
Bolton North East	8·56
Loughborough	8·54
Crosby	8·54
Croydon North West	8·52
South East Staffordshire	8·50
Amber Valley	8·49
North Warwickshire	8·49
West Hertfordshire	8·47
Bradford West	8·45
Exeter	8·42
Burnley	8·42
North Hertfordshire	8·41
South Ribble	8·40
Mid Worcestershire	8·40
Upminster	8·38
Mid Kent	8·37
Spelthorne	8·35
Aldridge-Brownhills	8·35
Meriden	8·32
Norwich South	8·30
Solihull	8·30
Orpington	8·30
Gravesham	8·28
Swansea West	8·25
Croydon Central	8·25
Cannock and Burntwood	8·23
Oxford West and Abingdon	8·22
Cardiff North	8·20
Uxbridge	8·18
Rugby and Kenilworth	8·16
Bridgend	8·15
Cheltenham	8·14
Gedling	8·09
Halesowen and Stourbridge	8·08
Walthamstow	8·07
Angus East	8·07
Alyn and Deeside	8·06
Warwick and Leamington	8·05
Edinburgh Central	8·05
Braintree	8·04
Tottenham	8·04
North Bedfordshire	8·01
Leyton	7·96
South Derbyshire	7·96
East Lothian	7·91
Lewisham West	7·91
Romsey and Waterside	7·90
Reading West	7·89
Dartford	7·87
Copeland	7·84
Huddersfield	7·84
Leicester South	7·82

Parliamentary constituencies	Per cent.
Norwood	7·82
Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central	7·77
Mitcham and Morden	7·77
Sedgefield	7·77
Aldershot	7·76
Hackney South and Shoreditch	7·73
Cambridge	7·73
Liverpool Mossley Hill	7·70
Ayr	7·70
Halifax	7·68
Watford	7·68
Bolton South East	7·67
Greenwich	7·67
Bexley Heath	7·66
Ashton-under-Lyne	7·62
Norwich North	7·59
Sheffield Hillsborough	7·58
Oldham Central and Royton	7·50
Sherwood	7·50
Hornchurch	7·49
Edinburgh South	7·46
Eastleigh	7·45
Newcastle-under-Lyme	7·45
Harlow	7·45
Chelmsford	7·44
Newport West	7·42
Manchester Gorton	7·41
City of Chester	7·40
Heywood and Middleton	7·39
Tynemouth	7·39
Wallasey	7·38
Pontypridd	7·38
Birmingham Selly Oak	7·36
Northampton North	7·36
Braintree	7·33
Cardiff West	7·34
Barnsley West and Penistone	7·34
Lewisham East	7·32
Bradford South	7·32
Plymouth Sutton	7·32
Kingswood	7·31
Basildon	7·31
Leigh	7·31
Lincoln	7·28
Dewsbury	7·26
Welwyn Hatfield	7·24
Dudley West	7·23
Walsall South	7·20
Worsley	7·18
North Luton	7·17
Ealing Southall	7·17
Nuneaton	7·13
Eltham	7·12
Gillingham	7·12
Nottingham East	7·11
Bolsover	7·10
Newport East	7·09
Erewash	7·09
Newham North East	7·07
Leicester East	7·07
Milton Keynes	7·05
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	7·04
Medway	7·04
Don Valley	7·04
Ealing North	7·03
Oldham West	7·02
Barrow and Furness	7·01
Vauxhall	7·00
Wirral South	6·97
Neath	6·95
Ashfield	6·93
Lewisham Deptford	6·93
Birmingham Hall Green	6·91
Stretford	6·91
Portsmouth North	6·90
Warrington South	6·90
Basingstoke	6·89

Parliamentary constituencies	Per cent.
Bradford North	6·87
Denton and Reddish	6·85
Wigan	6·84
Wakefield	6·80
Salford East	6·80
Normanton	6·78
Birmingham Ladywood	6·78
Brent South	6·78
Mansfield	6·76
Stevenage	6·73
Makerfield	6·73
Southampton Itchen	6·73
Bow and Poplar	6·68
Newham North West	6·67
Morley and Leeds South	6·67
Cynon Valley	6·66
Preston	6·66
The Wrekin	6·64
Rhondda	6·63
Southampton Test	6·62
Coventry South West	6·61
Doncaster North	6·61
Bristol East	6·58
Rother Valley	6·57
Caerphilly	6·54
Glasgow Cathcart	6·53
Slough	6·52
Eccles	6·51
Glasgow Hillhead	6·43
Ipswich	6·41
Luton South	6·41
Birkenhead	6·40
Manchester Blackley	6·40
Leicester West	6·38
York	6·37
Stoke-on-Trent North	6·35
Islwyn	6·34
Oxford East	6·33
Ogmore	6·29
Cardiff South and Penarth	6·28
Glanford and Scunthorpe	6·28
Dumbarton	6·25
Feltham and Heston	6·24
Birmingham Sparkbrook	6·23
Erith and Crayford	6·23
Ellesmere Port and Neston	6·21
Liverpool Broadgreen	6·21
Great Grimsby	6·20
Bristol South	6·19
Gosport	6·18
Gloucester	6·14
Swindon	6·13
Monklands East	6·12
Hayes and Harlington	6·11
Southwark and Bermondsey	6·11
Doncaster Central	6·10
Chesterfield	6·08
Hamilton	6·06
Peterborough	6·05
Bristol North West	6·05
Crawley	6·03
Liverpool Garston	6·00
Hemsworth	6·00
Langbaurgh	5·98
Coventry North West	5·98
Stoke-on-Trent South	5·96
Blaydon	5·96
Sunderland South	5·96
Nottingham South	5·94
Clydebank and Milngavie	5·93
Thurrock	5·91
Dagenham	5·90
Newham South	5·85
Stockton South	5·84
Leeds East	5·84
Woolwich	5·82
Darlington	5·82

Parliamentary constituencies	Per cent.
Dudley East	5·80
Carlisle	5·79
Walsall North	5·77
Derby South	5·77
Warrington North	5·75
St. Helens North	5·75
Torfaen	5·72
East Kilbride	5·71
Stoke-on-Trent Central	5·70
Edinburgh East	5·67
City of Durham	5·67
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney	5·64
Kingston-upon-Hull West	5·61
North Durham	5·61
Sheffield Henley	5·61
Blaenau Gwent	5·61
Derby North	5·61
Kirkcaldy	5·59
Peckham	5·59
Leeds West	5·56
Falkirk West	5·54
Dunfermline West	5·54
Wentworth	5·51
Barnsley Central	5·50
Edinburgh Leith	5·50
West Bromwich East	5·46
Aberavon	5·44
Glasgow Pollock	5·43
Barking	5·42
Wolverhampton South East	5·42
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	5·42
Midlothian	5·39
Warley East	5·36
Edinburgh Pentlands	5·34
St. Helens South	5·32
Sheffield Central	5·29
Livingston	5·27
Barnsley East	5·27
Pontefract and Castleford	5·25
Warley West	5·23
Birmingham Perry Barr	5·21
Coventry South East	5·19
Glasgow Rutherglen	5·19
Hartlepool	5·16
Coventry North East	5·12
Cunninghame South	5·12
Wansbeck	5·11
Rotherham	5·11
Jarrow	5·11
Monklands West	5·10
Birmingham Yardley	5·06
Aberdeen South	5·05
Manchester Central	5·05
Swansea East	5·04
Edinburgh West	5·04
Glasgow Shettleston	4·97
Newcastle-upon-Tyne North	4·97
Falkirk East	4·97
Leeds Central	4·96
Sheffield Attercliffe	4·92
Plymouth Devonport	4·92
Manchester Wythenshawe	4·88
Clackmannan	4·83
Knowsley South	4·73
Birmingham Erdington	4·71
Linlithgow	4·71
South Shields	4·70
Liverpool Riverside	4·67
Blyth Valley	4·66
Birmingham Small Heath	4·64
Houghton and Washington	4·63
Halton	4·61
Kingston-upon-Hull North	4·53
Central Fife	4·50
Glasgow Central	4·48
West Bromwich West	4·46
Newcastle-upon-Tyne East	4·45

Parliamentary constituencies	Per cent.
Wolverhampton North East	4·44
Birmingham Northfield	4·43
Dundee West	4·42
Nottingham North	4·39
Liverpool West Derby	4·38
Rother	4·37
Birmingham Hodge Hill	4·34
Motherwell North	4·34
Liverpool Walton	4·33
Middlesbrough	4·32
Sunderland and North	4·31
Paisley South	4·27
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4·23
Roslin	4·22
Gateshead East	4·22
Easington	4·20
Dundee East	4·16
Glasgow Maryhill	4·13
Dunfermline East	4·12
Sheffield Brightside	4·10
Stockton North	4·07
Tyne Bridge	4·04
Wallsend	4·01
Motherwell South	3·98
Kingston-upon-Hull East	3·93
Aberdeen North	3·92
Paisley North	3·90
Greenock and Port Glasgow	3·76
Knowsley North	3·74
Glasgow Govan	2·80
Glasgow Garscadden	2·42
Glasgow Springburn	2·42
Glasgow Provan	2·08

Northern Ireland

Parliamentary Constituency	Per cent.
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	22·17
Mid-Ulster	21·84
South Down	19·02
North Antrim	16·08
Newry and Armagh	15·62
East Londonderry	14·98
Strangford	10·58
Upper Bann	9·32
Lagan Valley	9·11
South Antrim	8·55
Foyle	8·16
North Down	7·60
East Antrim	6·64
Belfast South	5·92
Belfast East	5·03
Belfast North	4·70
Belfast West	3·30

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Barron asked the Paymaster General what delays there are in the payment of the enterprise allowance scheme; how much money is involved; and how many people are affected.

Mr. Trippier: I am satisfied that the 83,000 people currently in receipt of the enterprise allowance normally receive their allowance on the date payment is due.

Mr. Barron asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the report of the current Manpower Services Commission review into the payments of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I am satisfied with the operation of the current payment system for the enterprise allowance scheme. I have no plans to publish the internal report of an MSC study which is being carried out to ensure that the current system is the most cost effective way of making the payments.

Skillcentres

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list the skillcentres *(a)* open in June 1979 and *(b)* closed since 1979, and what was the unemployment rate in the local travel-to-work area for each skillcentre (i) in June 1979 and (ii) at the latest date for which figures are available;

(2) for each skillcentre closed since 1979, what was the unemployment rate *(a)* in June 1979, *(b)* in the month of closure and *(c)* at the latest date for which figures are available;

(3) for each skillcentre what was *(a)* the number of trainees completing courses and *(b)* the total training hours offered (i) in 1979 and (ii) the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *642-46*]: I regret that the table in my previous reply contained a number of omissions and small errors. Following is the corrected reply:

The available information is contained in the table:

Skillcentre or Skillcentre Annexe open in 1979	*Month of closure if no longer open*	*Travel-to-work area*	*Unemployment rate[1] 12 February 1987 per cent.*	*Unemployment rate[1,2] in month of closure per cent.*	*Number of trainees[4] completing courses 1985-86*	*Total training[4,5] weeks offered 1985-86*
Barking		London	10·0		217	8,455
Basildon		Southend	13·2		163	5,466
Bellshill		Lanarkshire	21·5	20·9	879	10,307
Belshill Annexe	November 1985	Lanarkshire	21·5			
Billingham		Stockton on Tees	18·4		279	7,204
Birmingham		Birmingham	15·5		621	15,992
Birmingham YTC	March 1986	Birmingham	15·5	16·4	[3]—	[3]—
Birmingham (Castle Bromwich)	January 1986	Birmingham	15·5	16·7	184	6,256
Bradford		Bradford	14·8		287	6,131
Bristol		Bristol	10·5		654	14,237
Bristol Annexe	December 1985	Bristol	10·5	11·3	[3]—	[3]—
Cardiff		Cardiff	13·6		426	18,009
Charlton		London	10·0		[3]—	[3]—
Chelmsford		Chelmsford and Braintree	7·2		100	3,075
Chesterfield		Chesterfield	15·4		81	3,634
Coventry		Coventry and Hinckley	14·4		273	6,993
Deptford		London	10·0		391	11,345
Doncaster	March 1986	Doncaster	19·7	20·6	119	2,528
Dumbarton	October 1985	Dumbarton	20·1	20·3	14	115
Dundee		Dundee	16·5		561	6,840
Dunfermline		Dunfermline	16·9		242	6,240
Durham		Durham	13·6		326	10,196
East Lancashire (Accrington)		Accrington and Rossendale	13·0		338	7,238
Edinburgh		Edinburgh	12·0	11·6	334	8,456
Edinburgh Annexe	March 1986	Edinburgh	12·0			
Enfield		London	10·0		298	10,032
Glasgow		Glasgow	17·2		784	11,708
Glasgow (Govan)	June 1985	Glasgow	17·2	17·6	[3]—	[3]—
Glasgow (Queenslie)	August 1985	Glasgow	17·2	17·8	16	136
Gloucester		Gloucester	9·0		409	8,200
Gloucester Annexe	February 1986	Gloucester	9·0	10·1	86	2,134
Hull		Hull	16·8		545	6,480
Ipswich		Ipswich	8·4		147	5,767
Irvine		Irvine	25·6		191	4,830
Killingworth	December 1985	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	17·8	18·5	79	4,823
Kirby-in-Ashfield (Nottingham)	January 1986	Nottingham	13·3	14·0	275	2,754
Lambeth		London	10·0		64	663
Lambeth YTC	March 1986	London	10·0	10·7	[3]—	[3]—
Leeds		Leeds	11·9		483	9,769
Leicester		Leicester	10·0		236	7,160
Letchworth		Hitchin and Letchworth	7·6		462	14,319
Liverpool		Liverpool	19·8		549	7,970
Liverpool Annexe	February 1986	Liverpool	19·8	21·2	[3]—	[3]—
Llanelli	February 1986	Llanelli	17·4	19·0	114	2,035
Long Eaton (Nottingham)	February 1986	Nottingham	13·3	13·9	254	5,636

Skillcentre or Skillcentre Annexe open in 1979	Month of closure if no longer open	Travel-to-work area	Unemployment rate[1] [2] February 1987 per cent.	Unemployment rate[1] [2] in month of closure per cent.	Number of trainees[4] completing courses 1985-86	Total training[4] [5] weeks offered 1985-86
Manchester (Denton)	February 1986	Manchester	13·7	14·6	103	2,375
Manchester (Trafford)		Manchester	13·7		477	10,861
Manchester (Hindley Annexe)	February 1986	Manchester	13·7	14·6	36	1,198
Maryport		Carlisle	11·8		109	3,105
Medway South		Medway and Maidstone	11·3		306	11,385
Medway Annexe	March 1986	Sittingbourne and Sheerness	14·5	15·0	111	2,798
Middlesbrough	December 1986	Middlesbrough	21·7	23·2	75	1,775
Milton Keynes		Milton Keynes	12·2		153	5,451
Newport (Gwent)		Newport	15·2		627	11,161
Northampton		Northampton	9·2		89	1,881
North Staffs (Stoke on Trent)		Stoke	11·9		212	4,749
Norwich		Norwich	10·0		250	7,160
Nottingham		Nottingham	13·3		136	4,779
Perivale		London	10·0		160	6,667
Peterborough		Peterborough	12·9		162	5,445
Plymouth		Plymouth	14·7		438	8,208
Plymouth Annexe	January 1986	Plymouth	14·7	15·8	121	1,967
Portsmouth		Portsmouth	12·2		277	8,231
Preston		Preston	11·0		300	5,927
Reading		Reading	6·8		178	6,309
Redditch	January 1986	Birmingham	15·5	16·7	218	4,114
Redruth		Redruth and Cambourne	21·5		311	6,599
Rochdale		Rochdale	16·4		286	6,180
Runcorn		Widnes and Runcorn	18·2		215	5,412
St. Helens		Wigan and St. Helens	18·4		211	5,896
Sheffield		Sheffield	16·0		359	8,246
Slough		Slough	6·4		385	13,321
Southampton		Southampton	11·4		319	961
Southampton (Millbrook)		Southampton	11·4		271	7,130
Swindon		Swindon	11·6		228	6,509
Twickenham		Heathrow	6·8		262	8,898
Twickenham Annexe		Heathrow	6·8			
Tyneside (Gateshead)		South Tyneside	24·7		737	12,443
Tyneside Annexe	November 1985	South Tyneside	24·7	25·5	[3]	[3]
Waddon	September 1985	London	10·0	10·9	64	1,156
Waddon Annexe (Sydenham)	March 1986	London	10·0	10·7	49	2,552
Wakefield		Wakefield and Dewsbury	14·9		206	4,727
West Glamorgan		Neath and Port Talbot	13·4		477	9,826
West Gwent	December 1985	Newport	15·2	15·8	87	1,804
West Sussex (Lancing)		Worthing	8·3		295	8,487
West Sussex Annexe	December 1985	Worthing	8·3	8·6	87	2,993
Wigan		Wigan and St. Helens	18·4		192	4,872
Wolverhampton		Wolverhampton	18·0		321	7,415
Wolverhampton Annexe	January 1986	Wolverhampton	18·0	19·2	87	4,546
Wrexham		Wrexham	17·2		334	6,647
Blaenau, Gwent[6]	February 1983	Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenny	18·6			

[1] The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed.

[2] The comparison of unemployment rates is affected by seasonal factors and changes in the collection and compilation of data. Furthermore unemployment statistics are not available for travel-to-work areas in 1979 on the same basis as 1987 because of major revisions to the boundaries in 1984. Statistics for travel-to-work areas as defined in 1978 are available in the Library.

[3] Figures no longer available.

[4] Numbers of trainees completing courses and training weeks offered are not available in 1979.

[5] STA no longer keeps statistics of trainee hours available, the number of training weeks offered is used instead.

[6] The Blaenau, Gwent Skillcentre closed in February 1983. The employment rate in that month in the Ebbw Vale travel-to-work area was 24·3 per cent. This area is now covered by the Blaenau, Gwent and Abergavenny travel-to-work area, and an unemployment rate for this area for February 1983 is not available.

SCOTLAND

Prison Chaplains

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many chaplains of each denomination are appointed to Scottish prisons; and what fees were paid to them from public funds for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: There are 31 Church of Scotland, 21 Roman Catholic and six Episcopalian chaplains appointed to the Scottish prison service. All appointments are held on a part-time basis. For the financial year 1985-86 a total of £67,851 in fees and £7,282 in travelling and subsistence expenses were paid.

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the latest available figure for regional development grant expenditure in Scotland for the year 1986-87, and an estimate of what he expects the final figure to be.

Mr. Lang: Provisional final expenditure on regional development grant in Scotland in 1986-87 is £170·2 million.

Forestry Commission (Land Sales)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Forestry Commission has plans to offer for sale any further areas of land in Sutherland and Caithness.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *384*]: Not at present, but several areas are being considered for possible sale.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to ensure that the Forestry Commission gives conservation organisations first refusal when offering for sale parcels of land in areas of high conservation interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *384*]: Conservation organisations are given preference of opportunity to purchase parcels of land offered for sale by the Forestry Commission in areas of high conservation interest, provided they are able to obtain sponsorship from the appropriate Government Department or agency. This involves the Department or agency certifying that the sale of the land to the organisation concerned, to the exclusion of the public at large, would be particularly in the public interest.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Budget Proposals

63. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he expects to be the effect of the recent Budget proposals on average earnings of the lowest 10 per cent. of earners in 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Budget will increase the take-home pay of nearly all wage earners, allowing a much needed reduction in pay settlements and average earnings growth to take place.

64. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of new jobs that will be created as a result of the recent Budget proposals.

Mr. MacGregor: Unemployment has fallen by 145,000 over the last six months, the biggest half-yearly fall since 1973. There is every prospect of a further fall through 1987.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table for each year since 1971 showing tax thresholds for each of a one-, two-, three- and four-child family as a percentage of the cut-off points on the income scale at which entitlement to family income supplement is extinguished, and as a percentage of average male manual earnings.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information is in the tables. A family is entitled to family income supplement if its gross income (excluding child benefit and certain other benefits) falls short of a specified limit, "the prescribed amount". Once family income supplement has been awarded, it remains payable for 12 months even if the family's income subsequently increases. From 1972-73 onwards, table 1 compares the weekly equivalent of the tax threshold with the level of income below which a family making a family income supplement claim in April of each year would be entitled to the benefit. This family would then be in receipt of family income supplement for the whole fiscal year. As family income supplement was introduced in August 1971, the figures for 1971-72 compare the tax threshold with the introductory prescribed amounts.

TABLE 1

Weekly equivalents of tax thresholds as percentages of the prescribed amount for Family Income Supplement

	One earner married couple			
	with one child[1]	*with two children*[2]	*with three children*[3]	*with four children*[4]
1971-72	85·1	86·1	89·2	94·4
1972-73	93·4	93·4	95·8	100·0
1973-74	87·2	85·6	86·4	89·1
1974-75	85·0	85·6	87·9	91·5
1975-76	73·0	71·7	72·4	74·4
1976-77	68·3	70·4	73·6	77·5
1977-78	72·5	73·3	75·2	77·9
1978-79	67·9	66·7	66·6	67·5
1979-80	62·3	57·7	53·7	50·2
1980-81	61·6	55·7	50·9	46·9
1981-82	55·7	50·3	45·8	42·1
1982-83	57·0	51·4	46·8	42·9
1983-84	62·9	56·6	51·4	47·1
1984-85	67·4	60·7	55·2	50·6
1985-86	68·1	61·0	54·7	49·2
1986-87	72·1	64·5	57·9	52·1
1987-88	72·5	64·8	58·1	52·3

[1] Aged under 11.
[2] Two children aged under 11.
[3] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11 to 15.
[4] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11 to 15, one aged 16.

TABLE 2
Tax thresholds as percentages of average male manual earnings[1]

	One earner married couple			
	with one child[2]	*with two children*[3]	*with three children*[4]	*with four children*[5]
1971-72	49·3	55·3	63·1	72·8
1972-73	52·7	58·0	64·8	73·3
1973-74	45·9	50·3	56·1	63·3
1974-75	43·1	48·6	55·3	63·1
1975-76	37·9	41·3	45·9	51·5
1976-77	38·9	43·7	49·4	56·0
1977-78	42·6	47·0	52·3	58·4
1978-79	36·3	38·8	41·8	45·5
1979-80	34·5	34·5	34·5	34·5
1980-81	35·4	35·4	35·4	35·4
1981-82	32·1	32·1	32·1	32·1
1982-83	34·1	34·1	34·1	34·1
1983-84	36·1	36·1	36·1	36·1
1984-85	37·9	37·9	37·9	37·9
1985-86	38·9	38·9	38·9	38·9
[6]1986-87	38·2	38·2	38·2	38·2
[6]1987-88	37·3	37·3	37·3	37·3

[1] Financial year average earnings of full time males aged over 21 working a full week.
[2] Aged under 11.
[3] Two children aged under 11.
[4] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11 to 15.
[5] Two children aged under 11, one aged 11 to 15, one aged 16.
[6] Provisional.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Soley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish figures on the use of Customs and Excise powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in the same form as used by the Home Office.

Mr. Brooke: Statistics covering the same ground as those produced annually under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act by the Home Office are included by the board of Customs and Excise in its annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Finance Bill

Mr. Rhodes James asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Finance Bill will be published.

Mr. MacGregor: The Finance Bill will be published on Wednesday 8 April.

Public Expenditure

Sir David Price asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, following his Budget proposals and the Government's expenditure plans for 1987-88, what percentage of the gross domestic product will be represented by public expenditure, taxation and the public sector borrowing requirement, respectively, in 1987-88; and how these percentages compare with similar figures for 1978-79.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *394*]: Following is the information:

Expenditure, Receipts and Borrowing as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product

	1978-79	[1]*1987-88*
General Government Expenditure	43·2	42·25
Taxes and National Insurance Contributions[2]	33·9	38
Public Sector Borrowing	5·3	1

Notes:
[1] FSBR forecasts
[2] General Government Taxes on Income, Expenditure and Capital plus National Insurance Contributions.

Inland Revenue Office, Cumbernauld

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the present staffing establishment is for the Inland Revenue office at Cumbernauld, and the projected establishment for each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *394*]: The present complement at the Inland Revenue accounts office, Cumbernauld, is 1,110. However, this is currently subject to a review by the Inland Revenue's staffing inspectors, who will make their recommendations by early May. Decisions about any resulting changes in the complement, and staffing projections for the next five years, (to include changes as a result of the introduction of new technology), will be made as soon as possible thereafter. The trades unions concerned will be fully consulted. The Department will also be examining the staffing requirement of the new office in Cumbernauld which is to administer the profit-related pay scheme, details of which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his recent Budget.

Inland Revenue (Lawyers)

Mr. Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the complement of lawyers in the Inland Revenue; how many of these posts are unfilled; and what percentage of lawyers in post have been in the Civil Service for five years or more.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *394*]: The current complement of lawyers in the Solicitor's Office (England and Wales) is 58 and Solicitor's Office (Scotland) five. The latest staff in post in England and Wales is 53, a shortfall of five. There is no shortfall in Scotland. Seventy-five per cent. of the Department's lawyers have been in the Civil Service for five years or more.

Customs and Excise (Lawyers)

Mr. Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the complement of lawyers in the Customs and Excise; how many of these posts are unfilled; and what percentage of lawyers in post have beeen in the Civil Service for five years or more.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *394*]: The complement of lawyers in Customs and Excise is 83: seven of these posts are unfilled. The percentage of lawyers in post with five or more years' service is 63 per cent. Six of the seven vacancies are expected to be filled under a current recruitment exercise.

Manufacturing Industry (Profits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1957 trading profits of manufacturing industry as a percentage of total profits for all enterprises on *(a)* a gross basis and *(b)* net of tax and all allowances and relief.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *396*]: The information requested is not available.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for table 13.4 of the 1986 edition of the "United Kingdom National Accounts" a division for the year 1975, 1979 and 1985 between manufacturing and other industrial and commercial companies for overseas securities, for overseas direct and other investment in the United Kingdom, and for direct and other investment abroad; and if he will specify the amount of direct investment in each direction accounted for by retained profits.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *396*]: Figures for direct investment in overseas manufacturing companies' securities for all years 1974-1984 are published in table 1.4 of *Business Monitor* MA4 'Overseas transactions'; information for 1985 is not yet available. No other industrial analysis of the direct or portfolio investment comprising "overseas securities" is available.

The division of "overseas direct and other investment in the United Kingdom" showing the amount of direct investment in manufacturing industry accounted for by retained profit is:

£ million

	Direct investment in overseas manufacturing industry				
	Retained profits	*Other*	*Total*	*Other investment abroad*	*Total*
1975	−133	−59	−192	−956	−1,148
1979	−895	−129	−1,024	−1,775	−2,799

Note: Increase in United Kingdom liabilities shown negative.

The division of "direct and other investment abroad" is:

£ million

	Direct investment in United Kingdom manufacturing industry				
	Retained profits	*Other*	*Total*	*Other investment in United Kingdom*	*Total*
1975	543	−23	520	341	861
1979	873	−118	755	3,339	4,094

Note: Increase in United Kingdom assets shown positive.

Separate information on that part of the total investment shown in each table which is accounted for by retained profits is not available. Figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Earnings

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to April 1987 the information on net earnings provided in his reply of 10 February to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), *Official Report*, columns *177-78*.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *215*]: It is not possible to provide estimates of the levels of earnings of the top 5 per cent. of earners in April 1987 until the 1987 "New Earnings Survey" is published. Results normally become available in the autumn.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Acellular Vaccine

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cause of the delay in the introduction of the acellular vaccine in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the acellular pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine.

The vaccine which has been developed at the Centre for Applied Microbiological Research is ready for testing in children as soon as regulatory requirements on safety are met. That vaccine will be compared with others in clinical trials, and the results of trials in Sweden, France and the United States will also be studied, ensuring that the range of vaccines available have been properly assessed for safety and efficacy before they are introduced generally in this country.

Hospital Construction

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the progress on hospital construction within each of the district health authorities within the West Midlands regional health authority's responsibility; which already announced programmes have been delayed, and why; and if he will make a detailed statement on the extension for the Walsall Manor hospital.

Mrs. Currie: The West Midlands regional health authority is responsible for the management of building schemes contained in its operational capital programme. The hon. Member may therefore wish to write to the chairman of the regional health authority for further information about individual schemes.

I understand, however, that the regional health authority has decided to defer by some nine months the start on site dates of a number of developments. The adjustment of the starting dates arises from a review of the region's £870 million capital programme to ensure that the year-on-year expenditure remains within budget. Recent expenditure has been rising at a higher level than anticipated because of the success in keeping to construction target dates.

Health Strategies

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* progress to date made by Her Majesty's Government towards meeting each of the 38 targets in the "Strategies for Health for All by the Year 2000", as laid down by the World Health Organisation's European office in 1985.

Mrs. Currie: An evaluation of progress towards achieving the targets was carried out in 1985, and copies of the United Kingdom report entitled "UK Evaluation Report of the Strategies for Health for All by the Year 2000" have been placed in the Library. This report showed that the United Kingdom had already achieved a number of targets and was on course to achieving most of the rest by the specified dates. The World Health Organisation has prepared and expects to publish shortly a consolidated report of all the 1985 evaluation reports forwarded by each of the member states in the WHO's European region. In conjunction with other relevant Government Departments we are about to undertake further monitoring of the

situation as in 1987 with regard to progress towards achieving the targets in the United Kingdom, in parallel with each of the other member states, for submission to WHO in 1988 and a copy of the United Kingdom report will be placed in the Library when completed.

Burton District Hospital

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why work on the main part of phase II of the Burton district hospital is being delayed; and for how long.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the West Midlands regional health authority is responsible for the management of individual building schemes contained in its operational capital programme. However, I understand that work on the main part of phase II will commence in March 1989. The adjustment of the starting date arises from a review of the region's £870 million capital programme to ensure that the year on year expenditure remains within budget.

National Schizophrenia Fellowship

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider increasing the funding to the National Schizophrenia Fellowship from £80,000 to £250,000.

Mrs. Currie: Our current grant to the National Schizophrenia Fellowship will finish on 31 March 1987. An application for a renewal grant was received on 16 February and is under consideration. It is highly unlikely that we shall be able to meet the Fellowship's request for a more than threefold increase in our financial support, even in the knowledge of the good work the organisation carries out. We shall let them have our decision as soon as we are able.

Schizophrenia

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department spends per year on schizophrenia research, treatment and aftercare; and what this figure is as a percentage of the total annual National Health Service budget.

Mrs. Currie: A substantial proportion of the £1 billion annual expenditure on mental illness services is spent on the care and treatment of people with schizophrenia, although statistics are not available centrally to show the precise proportion. Also, we have set aside £6 million over the next three years to establish mental illness development projects in each National Health Service region, and to assist their progress towards improved patterns of care, supplementing three projects on aftercare for schizophrenia which were launched in 1983.

We expect to spend about £0·9 million in 1986-87 on continuing mental illness research projects, a number of which are relevant to the study of schizophrenia. In addition, we have set aside £0·5 million for six new research studies in mental illness—all including people with schizophrenia and one including such people only.

The total gross National Health Service budget for 1986-87 is £18·930 billion.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names and addresses of the private nursing homes which he has approved in the Mid-Staffordshire parliamentary constituency.

Mrs. Currie: Health authorities exercise the function of registering nursing homes, and information by parliamentary constituency is not held centrally. Following is a list of homes registered as at 31 December 1986 by Mid-Staffordshire Health Authority, whose area includes my hon. Friend's constituency.

Institutions Registered with Mid-Staffordshire Health Authority Under Section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984

Position as at 31 December 1986[1]

Douglas Macmillan Home, Barlaston Road, Blurton, Stoke-on-Trent
Seighford Hall Nursing Home, Seighford, Near Stafford
St. Mary's Home, Margaret Street, Stone
Walton Bury Nursing Home, Walton on the Hill, Stafford
Longbridge Nursing Home, Levedale Road, Dunstan, Stafford
Rowley House Nursing Home, 26 Rowley Avenue, Stafford
The Hill Nursing Home, Station Road, Barlaston, Stoke on Trent
The Manor House Nursing Home, Hyde Lea, Stafford
Standon Hall Nursing Home, Cotes Heath, Eccleshall, Stafford
Prestwood Nursing Home, Prestwood, Stowbridge
Heyfields Residential Nursing Home, Tittensor Road, Tittensor, Stafford[2]
Camelot Court, Wing House Lane, Tittensor, Stafford[2]
Hilcote Hall Private Nursing Home, Eccleshall, Stafford[2]
The Millhouse, Great Bridgford, Stafford[2]
Haywood Abbey Nursing Home, Great Haywood, Stafford[2]

[1] Provisional list for 1986.
[2] Present for the first time in 1986 returns.

Local Authority Part III Accommodation

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many places there are in local authority part III accommodation.

Mrs. Currie: As at 31 March 1985, the latest date for which firm figures are available, there were 116,080 places in local authority part III homes in England. The provisional figure for 31 March 1986 is 115,700. At 31 March 1985 there were 12,187 people sponsored by local authorities in voluntary and private homes under part III arrangements. The provisional figure for 31 March 1986 is 7,710

Private Nursing and Residential Homes

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private nursing homes and private residential homes have been registered each year since the scheme began; and how many beds are involved.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The table gives details of the latest information collected centrally in respect of privately run homes in England registered under the Registered Homes Act 1984:

	Residential Care Homes (at 31 March)		Nursing Homes[1] (at 31 December)	
	Homes	Places	Homes	Beds
1985	5,533	84,365	1,833	50,985
1986 (provisional)	6,790	103,500	n/a	n/a

[1] Including homes run by voluntary bodies.
n/a Not available.

Community Care (Review)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the review of community care currently being undertaken by Sir Roy Griffiths to be completed; when the report will be published; and if he intends to consult Health Service trade unions and other interested parties on any proposals that emerge.

Mrs. Currie: Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to complete his review within 12 months of its start in December 1986. We will consider how to carry forward action on the report once we have received it.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many payments of severe weather allowance have been made in Wales this winter.

Mr. Major: Up to 3 March 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, approximately 125,000 £5 weekly payments for exceptionally cold weather were made in Wales.

Fluoridation

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the proportion of five-year-olds who are free of dental caries in South West Avon, West Sussex, South West Thames and other areas of the United Kingdom not yet benefiting from artificially fluoridated drinking water supplies.

Mrs. Currie: Information about the proportion of five year olds free from dental caries in those areas cited by my hon. Friend is not readily available.

Studies which have been carried out contrasting comparable fluoridated and non-fluoridated areas however have consistently shown that the reduction in dental decay is between one third to one half greater in the fluoridated areas than in the comparable non-fluoridated areas.

Maternity Payments

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to introduce the new lump sum maternity grant of £80 from the new social fund following the withdrawal of the £25 grant on 6 April.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) on 20 March at column *669*.

Family Practitioner Service, Haringey

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the expenditure of the Haringey family practitioner service or its predecessor in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* at the latest available date; how many medical general practitioners were employed full time on each of those dates; and by what percentage in real terms their salaries increased over the period stated.

Mr. Newton: The information available in relation to the Enfield and Haringey family practitioner committee is as follows:

A. Expenditure on family practitioner services:

	£
1979-80	[1] 16,772,000
1983-84	26,773,739
1985-86	30,971,108

[1] Estimated full year figures. Enfield and Haringey FPC separated from Brent and Harrow FPC during this year.

B. Total number of general medical practitioners in contract with the FPC:

	Responsible	Non responsible
1979	253	[1]
1983	251	388
1987 (March)	258	356

[1] No reliable figure available.

C. Information is not available centrally about actual remuneration for practitioners in contract with individual FPCs. The intended average net income for GMPs in Great Britain increased by 11·5 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and 1985-86.

Hospital Services

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district health authorities throughout Britain are currently *(a)* without accident and emergency hospital departments and *(b)* without a general hospital providing acute services within their own boundaries.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. In 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, patient activity in NHS accident and emergency departments was recorded in all district health authorities. All district health authorities contained acute, mainly acute or partly acute hospitals providing acute services within their own boundaries.

Nurses

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many practice nurses are currently employed in Haringey by medical general practitioners working in the area.

Mr. Newton: At 1 October 1986 general medical practitioners for whom Enfield and Haringey family practitioner committee was the responsible FPC employed 28 practice nurses (13 full-time equivalents). The figures exclude general medical practitioners practising from health centres for whom information is not available centrally.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Burnley on 23 March, if he will give the cost and specialties for each district listed in the answer.

Mr. Newton: Full details of the nature, cost, specialties concerned and impact of all projects supported by the waiting list fund, including those involving the private sector, were placed in the Library on 23 March.

US Forces (Civilian Hospitals)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many civilian hospital beds in Britain have been allocated for use by the United States Marine Corps in wartime;

(2) how many civilian hospital beds in Britain have been allocated for use by the United States Army in wartime;

(3) how many civilian hospital beds in Britain have been allocated for use by the United States Navy in wartime;

(4) if he will publish the recent agreement with the United States authorities allocating civilian hospital beds in Britain for use by the United States Air Force in wartime.

Mrs. Currie: Although the existence and outline concept of the 1973 United States/United Kingdom Lines of Communication Arrangement has been de-classified, the details are regarded as classified by both the American and British Governments. The Arrangement provides for host nation support to US forces in the event of war involving NATO countries. This includes interim medical care for US military casualties in National Health Service hospitals. The United States are also establishing their own contingency hospitals in the United Kingdom which would be equipped, manned and financed by the American Government, and activated only in a crisis.

Planning for the NHS in time of crisis or war does not include allocating specific civilian hospital beds in Britain for use by any US forces.

Disabled People

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to how many people with disabilities who live in the Greater London council area are of working age;

(2) what proportion of disabled people are known to be in the London area.

Mr. Major: The information available centrally relates to the numbers of disabled persons by age registered with social services departments as being blind, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing or physically handicapped. Registration is voluntary. The registers may lag in reflecting migration or deaths. People with multiple handicaps may also be on more than one register. The latest available data are given in the table.

Greater London area

Numbers

	As at 31 March	*Aged 16-64*	*Total*	[1] *Percentage*
Number of persons registered as				
Blind	1986	3,915	17,851	15
Partially sighted	1986	2,437	10,377	15
Deaf	1986	3,765	6,476	19
Hard of hearing	1986	2,073	12,397	20
Physically handicapped	1984	62,065	199,060	18

[1] London total as percentage of England total.

NHS (Education and Training)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will state, on the basis of the latest available figures, what National Health Service resources were expended on continuing education and training, either provided by the National Health Service or external agencies, on a full-time and part-time basis, in total and in each English region and Wales for the following categories: *(a)* chiropodists, *(b)* clinical psychologists, *(c)* dieticians, *(d)* medical laboratory scientific officers, *(e)* midwives, *(f)* nurses, including health visitors, *(g)* occupational therapists, *(h)* orthopaedists, *(i)* pharmacists, *(j)* physicists, *(k)* physiotherapists, *(l)* radiographers, diagnostic and therapeutic and *(m)* speech therapists.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not collected centrally. However the National Health Service Training Authority at the request of the National Health Service Management Board is developing performance indicators to show the resources devoted to National Health Service training and the quantity provided. Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state what are the per capita expenditure figures for each of the following categories in the National Health Service in total and in each English region and Wales for the latest available year: *(a)* chiropodists, *(b)* clinical psychologists, *(c)* dieticians, *(d)* medical laboratory officers, *(e)* midwives, *(f)* nurses, including health visitors, *(g)* occupational therapists, *(h)* orthopaedists, *(i)* pharmacists, *(j)* physicists, *(k)* physiotherapists, *(l)* radiographers, diagnostic and therapeutic and *(m)* speech therapists.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available for England. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Drugs (Licensing and Surveillance)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on drug licensing and surveillance by the medicines division of his Department;

(2) if he will introduce legislation leading to the establishment of an independent medicines board with appropriate financing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Government have no plans to change the arrangements for the licensing and control of medicines. We have recently set up a review "to examine the issues for DHSS arising from the continued increases in licence applications and other work under the Medicines Act and to recommend ways of dealing expeditiously with this work, while maintaining adequate standards for the safety, efficacy and quality of human medicines in the United Kingdom".

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is able to announce the appointment of a new director for the national development team for mentally handicapped people; and if he will outline the role of the team.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend has approved the appointment of Mr. Derek Thomas and he will take up his duties on 1 April

Mr. Thomas has been the District Psychologist for North Manchester health authority since July 1984. He has considerable experience — as a practitioner and subsequently in the management, planning and development of services for people with a mental handicap and their families. We look to him to provide effective leadership of the team at this time of major transition from hospital to community services, building on the strengths of the widely experienced panel, and the work of the current acting director Mr. Jim Gardner and his associate director Mrs. Lotte Mason.

The team is in a unique position to provide expert, independent advice to field authorities—not just about existing services but about joint plans and strategies and their effectiveness in building quality assurance into the development of services. We shall also expect the team to play its part in keeping Ministers informed about the state of current services, the nature and direction of change and the implications for policy.

I expect the team to place greater emphasis on its diagnostic role in identifying problems within the areas of authorities seeking the team's advice, drawing their attention to the examples in various parts of the country of excellent programmes and of sensitive and skilful management of change—so that the best use can be made of all available resources (including skilled manpower and general community resources) in developing and maintaining comprehensive good quality services to meet individual needs.

National Health Service (Audit)

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any conclusions on the use of accountancy firms for the statutory audit of National Health Service authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Private sector firms of accountants have been employed as statutory auditors of a small number of health authorities since 1982 as an experiment to determine what benefits might be derived from the involvement of accountancy firms in the statutory audit of National Health Service authorities which until then had been undertaken entirely by Departmental audit staff.

A comprehensive review of the experiment has now been completed by a steering group, the membership of which included the head of the Government accountancy service, senior members of the staff of the National Audit Office and of the Audit Commission, and the director of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. I have now considered their report, and I have accepted their main recommendation that the continued involvement of private firms can be of benefit to the whole statutory audit process, and that in future up to 50 statutory audits shall be undertaken by five audit firms. The statutory audit of the remainder of the National Health Service will continue to be carried out by the Department's audit staff.

Preparations are now being made to invite competitive tenders for these audits, in order to make appointments to commence with the audit of the accounts for 1987-88.

Local Offices, Peckham

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 19 February 1987, *Official Report*, column *820*, why premises at 72 Rye lane, Peckham, were considered suitable for occupation by the task force if the ventilation system renders the premises inadequate for use as a Department of Health and Social Security office.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The premises at 72 Rye lane was used by the Department of Health and Social Security as accommodation for about 100 staff until June 1986. The Department of Employment, which had an urgent need for temporary accommodation for their North Peckham task force, then occupied a small part of the premises. The Department of Employment consider that the defects in the ventilation system do not represent a serious problem in view of the lower density of occupation and the working methods of the task force.

Private Medicine

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the total income received from private patients for each year since 1979 by each health district region by region.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 19 January 1987, c. *430*]: Regional figures for income under section 65 (private in-patients) and section 66 (private out-patients) of the National Health Service Act 1977 were given in my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member on 18 March 1987 at columns *508-14*.

District figures for the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85, and 1985-86 were given in the replies to the hon. Member on 6 June 1984 at columns *201-205*; 25 November 1985 at columns *483-92* and 5 February 1987 at columns *816-26*, respectively. District figures are not held centrally for years before NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Private Medical Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by district health authority and by local authority *(a)* the number of people placed by them in private psychiatric units on a day care basis, *(b)* the number of people placed by them in private psychiatric units as residential patients and *(c)* the average length of stay for each patient placed in residential care in private psychiatric units for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 6 March 1987, c. *722*]: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the Information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The information available centrally is given in the tables.

Patients receiving treatment under contractual arangements with institutions outside the National Health Service—mental illness specialty—discharges and deaths.

Health authority[1]	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Northallerton	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
York (North Yorkshire AHA)	41	44	49	52	35	47	54
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Leicestershire	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Peterborough	0	0	0	0	1	3	2
East Hertfordshire (Hertfordshire AHA)	10	2	0	0	0	2	0
City and Hackney	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Newnham	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Tower Hamlets	0	0	0	1	2	4	9
Haringey	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hampstead	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Medway	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
West Surrey and North East Hants.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
South West Surrey	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
Mid Downs	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Worthing	0	0	0	2	4	3	4
East Dorset (Dorset AHA)	0	0	4	2	4	3	3
Salisbury	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
East Berkshire (Berkshire AHA)	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
West Berkshire (Berkshire AHA)				0	1	0	0
Aylesbury Vale (Buckinghamshire AHA)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Wycombe (Buckinghamshire AHA)				0	1	0	0
Milton Keynes	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Northampton (Northampton AHA)	51	51	34	58	42	34	32
Kettering (Northampton AHA)				0	2	1	1
Central Manchester (North Western RHA and Manchester AHA)	554	519	274	351	347	378	454
Tameside and Glossop (North Western RHA and Manchester AHA)				0	0	96	73
Total—England	656	617	361	474	441	573	651

[1] Authorities making contractual arrangements prior to NHS reorganisation in 1982 are shown in parentheses.

Patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service—mental illness specialty—occupied beds[1].

Health authority[2]	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Northallerton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0·7
York (North Yorkshire AHA)	15	18	16	16	12	10	12·0
Leeds Western	0	0	0	0	0	1	1·0
Leicestershire	0	0	0	0	0	1	1·0
Barnsley	0	0	0	0	0	1	0·7
Peterborough	0	0	0	0	3	0	1·4
Huntingdon	0	0	0	0	0	0	1·0
Hounslow and Spelthorne	0	0	0	0	0	0	1·0
East Hertfordshire (Hertfordshire AHA)	5	2	0	0	0	1	0·0
City and Hackney	0	0	0	0	0	0	7·0
Newham	0	0	0	0	0	0	3·0
Tower Hamlets	0	0	0	1	1	1	3·0
Haringey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0·1
Waltham Forest	0	0	0	3	4	0	0·0
Brighton	0	0	0	0	0	3	0·0
Lewisham and North Southwark	0	0	0	0	1	0	0·0
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	0	0	0	2	1	1	0·0
South West Surrey	0	0	0	1	0	0	0·0
Mid Downs	0	0	0	0	1	4	2·0
Worthing	0	0	0	0	0	1	0·3
East Dorset (Dorset AHA)	0	0	4	4	5	4	4·4
Winchester	0	0	0	1	0	0	0·0
Salisbury	0	0	0	1	1	0	0·0
East Berkshire (Berkshire AHA)	3	2	1	0	0	1	3·8

Health authority[2]	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Aylesbury Vale (Buckinghamshire AHA)	2	1	3	1	0	0	0·0
Milton Keynes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0·1
Northampton (Northampton AHA)	37	34	33	30	30	28	23·0
Kettering (Northampton AHA)				2	1	0	0·0
Central Manchester (North Western RHA and Manchester AHA)	71	54	58	72	39	47	49·0
Tameside and Glossop (North Western RHA and Manchester AHA)				0	0	55	39·0
Trafford (North Western RHA and Manchester AHA)				1	0	0	0·0
Total—England	133	111	115	136	99	159	173·5

[1] For years 1979 to 1984 the occupied beds figures show the number of beds occupied at 31 December. For 1985 the figures relate to the average daily bed occupancy during the year.
[2] Authorities making contractual arrangements prior to NHS reorganisation in 1982 are shown in parenthesis.

Patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service—mental illness specialty—new out-patients

Health authority[1]	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
York (North Yorkshire AHA)	0	0	0	4	2	0	0
North Lincolnshire	0	0	0	59	4	0	0
Cambridge	0	0	0	0	19	23	138
Aylesbury Vale (Buckinghamshire AHA) / Wycombe (Buckinghamshire AHA)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
South Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
North Western RHA	12	19	6	4	0	0	0
Total—England	12	20	6	67	25	24	138

[1] Authorities making contractual arrangements prior to NHS reorganisation in 1982 are shown in parentheses.

Patients receiving treatment under contractural arangements with institutions outside the National Health Service—mental illness specialty—out-patient attendances

Health authority[1]	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
York (North Yorkshire AHA)	1	12	27	37	46	60	90
North Lincolnshire	0	0	0	153	35	0	0
Cambridge	0	0	0	0	37	116	399
Aylesbury Vale (Buckinghamshire AHA) / Wycombe (Buckinghamshire AHA)	0	10	0	0	0	0	0
South Warwickshire	0	0	0	0	0	14	0
North Western RHA	1,219	635	489	322	0	0	0
Total—England	1,220	657	516	512	118	190	489

[1] Authorities making contractual arrangements prior to NHS reorganisation in 1982 are shown in parentheses.

Meningitis

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what factors he takes into account when deciding whether to provide funding for meningitis research; what plans he has to increase the number of different studies of meningitis for which he provides funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 March 1987, c. *412*]: The Department is always prepared to consider well-founded proposals for research on any matter related to the health services, subject to funds being available, as is the Medical Research Council (which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science) when such research is biomedical. Research projects are always submitted for assessment by independent scientists on *(a)* their likelihood of success *(b)* the quality of the science involved *(c)* whether they are new work or repeats of work already done, and *(d)* their ethical suitability.

Proposals for medical or scientific studies must come from the professionals in the appropriate fields, but on meningitis the MRC plans a meeting of experts from which we hope will come advice on areas which are likely to lead to productive research.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what initiatives he has taken to raise the level of public awareness of the symptoms of meningitis.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 March 1987, c. *412*]: Meningitis in its various forms tends to occur sporadically and unpredictably. Consequently, it is mainly for health authorities to consider the extent and timing of any initiatives to remind professionals and inform parents of the symptoms and the treatment available. As my noble Friend has advised on several occasions when asked about meningitis, parents who feel their children are ill — particularly with high fever — should not hesitate to contact their doctor quickly. We are aware that one authority, Gloucester, has produced an excellent leaflet on meningitis for distribution to parents and has made its text available to other authorities. The Department is now urgently considering how best this leaflet might be adopted for more general use.

West Middlesex Hospital

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the West Middlesex hospital does not refuse emergency admissions from the London Ambulance Service.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 27 March 1987, c. 305]: Emergency admissions to the West Middlesex university hospital are a matter for the Hounslow and Spelthorne health authority. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of Hounslow and Spelthorne district health authority to discuss the current emergency admissions policy.

Placentas (Disposal)

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what relationships are established between National Health Service maternity hospitals and private sector companies and institutes regarding the disposal of placentas; what is the cost to the National Health Service of such arrangements; and what is the procedure for informing patients.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 30 March 1987]: Information is not available centrally about the arrangements made by individual health authorities.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Medical Graduates

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether graduates of medical facilities in the Republic of Ireland obtain principal general practice posts in Northern Ireland after serving a pre-registration house officer year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Doctors who have obtained their primary medical qualifications in the Republic of Ireland who are nationals of member states of the European Community other than the United Kingdom and have completed a pre-registration house officer year are eligible for appointment to principal general practice posts in Northern Ireland. United Kingdom nationals who obtained their primary medical qualifications in the Republic of Ireland must be vocationally trained for three years to be eligible for appointment to principal general practitioner posts in Northern Ireland.

General Practitioners

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland *(a)* how many principal general practitioners posts there are in Northern Ireland, *(b)* how many general practice principals are graduates of medical schools in the Republic of Ireland and *(c)* in what way the requirements for principal general practitioner posts differ as regards experience, as between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Following is the information:

(a) There were 905 principals in general practice in Northern Ireland at 1 March 1987.

(b) The information is not available readily and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

(c) Doctors who are nationals of the United Kingdom must have successfully completed three years' vocational training under the requirements of the Medical Practitioners (Vocational Training) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1979. At present there is no corresponding requirement in the Republic of Ireland.

Kilkeel Parades (Policing Costs)

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the estimated cost of policing the parades on 17 March in Kilkeel, County Down.

Mr. Scott: Approximately £43,000.

Well Women Clinics

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many well women clinics there are in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: No information is held centrally on the number of well women clinics in Northern Ireland.

Workplace Nurseries

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Government have taken to encourage the provision of workplace nurseries in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The provision of workplace nurseries is a matter for individual employers.

Government policy in relation to its own employees is to undertake, in co-operation with trade unions, pilot surveys to assess demand for child-care facilities in particular locations; thereafter Departments are encouraged to view sympathetically any proposals that emerge and to consider co-operation with other employers.

A pilot survey has been completed in the Stormont estate complex and the findings have been considered by a joint management/union working party. The report of the working party is now being examined by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Higher Education

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of *(a)* 18-year-old women and *(b)* 18-year-old men participate in higher education in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The estimated proportions of 18-year-old Northern Ireland domiciled women and men in full-time higher education in the United Kingdom in 1985-86 were 7·5 per cent. and 5·7 respectively. The proportions attending institutions within Northern Ireland were 5·5 per cent and 4 per cent. for women and men respectively.

Nurseries

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of provision of nurseries for children aged up to five years in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: At 30 June 1986 (the latest date for which figures are available), community and voluntary groups, employers and private individuals registered with the health and social services boards under the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968 were providing 12 nurseries offering places for 384 children.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Parking)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what existing regulatory restrictions

there are in relation to the parking of heavy goods vehicles in residential areas; and if he has proposals further to restrict such parking.

Mr. Needham: There are no existing regulatory restrictions that deal with the parking of heavy goods vehicles in residential areas specifically.

The parking of such vehicles overnight on public roads and on verges, between carriageways and on footways is, however, governed by general legislation.

There are no proposals at present to extend these provisions.

Short Brothers

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the members of the board of directors of Short Bros.; when they were appointed; and by whom.

Mr. Viggers: The information requested is as follows:

Directors	*Date of appointment*
Sir Philip Foreman CBE	1965
Sir John Sparrow	1984
Sir Sidney Bacon CBE	1980
F. F. H. Charlton CBE	1958
A. R. Manvell OBE	1982
D. M. McCallum CBE	1981
R. W. R. McNulty	1978
A. F. C. Roberts OBE	1980
H. E. Trevan-Hawke	1970

Sir Philip Foreman was appointed managing director of the board in 1967 by board resolution. The remaining directors were appointed or re-appointed by the Department of Economic Development.

Potatoes

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the market support prices for potatoes to apply in Northern Ireland for the 1987-88 crop year beginning on 1 July have been determined.

Mr. Viggers: Following consultation with the Ulster Farmers Union it has been decided that there should be no change for the 1987-88 crop to the level of market support that applied in 1986-87. The maximum target price for the 1987-88 season will remain at £46 per tonne. The target area for Northern Ireland planting is 12,750 hectares and the ceiling for any support operations is 60,000 tonnes.

I believe these levels will provide growers with a reasonable degree of support should it be necessary to introduce potato market support measures. I would hope that support measures will, however, not be necessary and I look to producers to make a positive contribution to market equilibrium by avoiding over-planting.

TBTO Leak (Lough Neagh)

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement regarding the TBTO chemical leak into Lough Neagh; what investigations have been made to determine any effects on eels or fish stocks in the lough or on water supplies; and what action the Government are taking in this matter.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *385*]: The Department of the Environment was notified on 30 January of a spillage at Crumlin of 10,000 litres of wood preservative containing 1 per cent. TBTO and 0·5 per cent. Dieldrin. The Department of Agriculture and the Fisheries Conservancy Board were alerted. Action was initiated to contain the spillage and commence clean-up operations. Residents in the vicinity were informed on 31 January. Subsequent sampling indicated that the measures taken had largely been successful in containing pollution to the factory complex and the Lennymore bay area in lough Neagh. The Department of Agriculture continues to sample eel and fish stocks and there has been no evidence of any fish kills. Regular analysis of water from the Lough put into public supply has not indicated any trace of TBTO or Dieldrin. The Departments of Agriculture and Environment have a joint monitoring programme on Lough Neagh which will indicate any short or long term effects of the spillage and a survey will be initiated on the wildlife in the area. Discussions are currently taking place with the timber firm involved on measures to prevent a recurrence and to ensure containment within the factory site.

European Year of the Environment

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining what plans relating to aspects of Government responsibilities in Northern Ireland have been drawn up with reference to European Year of the Environment.

Mr. Needham [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *385*]: Activities in connection with the European Year of the Environment are being co-ordinated through the United Kingdom European Year of the Environment Committee on which Northern Ireland is represented. A calendar of events has been prepared and includes conferences on coastal and marine conservation and on the Lagan Valley, the opening of visitor centres, open days in forest parks and nature reserves and the production of a schools educational programme.

TRANSPORT

Roads (Repairs)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has of the level of repairs outstanding on main roads in Britain in terms of miles and the funding required.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In England renewal works are outstanding for 50 miles of motorway and 218 miles of other trunk road carriageway. The costs of renewal will be about £150 million. In Scotland there is a backlog of about 30 miles of motorway and other trunk roads requiring strutural repairs. The present level of funding should enable the backlogs in England and Scotland to be cleared by about 1992. There is at present no identifiable backlog in Wales. Estimates for local roads are not available.

Road Clearance (London)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the level of effectiveness of *(a)* Lambeth, *(b)* Southwark, *(c)* Hackney, *(d)* Islington, *(e)* Brent and *(f)* Ealing in acting as his agents in clearing roads during the recent cold spell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: London boroughs generally coped well in extremely difficult conditions and we have since taken stock with them of the lessons from this experience. I do not think that it would be practicable to make any further assessment of individual performance.

Local Authority Airports (Directors' Salaries)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the present salaries of the directors of England's local authority airports, and their proposed salaries after 1 April 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Local authority airport directors' salaries are a matter for the local authorities concerned and this information is not available centrally. However, those airports established as companies under the Airports Act or otherwise will be required to publish information on directors' salaries in accordance with the provisions of the Companies Act.

Dorchester Bypass

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to invite tenders for the A35 Dorchester bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tenders have now been invited. Work is scheduled to begin in late summer, and should be completed by the middle of 1989.

General Lighthouse Fund

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport what were the reserves in the general lighthouse fund as of 31 March 1986.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The 1985-86 accounts of the general lighthouse fund, which will be laid before Parliament when completed, contain no provision for reserves as such but show liquid assets of £32·8 million as of 31 March 1986.

Vehicle Registration Prefix

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the decision to change the month for the annual introduction of the vehicle registration prefix from August to October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The decision in March 1986 to switch from August to October the annual change in vehicle registration numbering was taken in response to representations from the motor industry. It then became clear that the industry was not in fact in agreement and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State agreed last October to its request for a Government review into alternatives to the present system. He also agreed to leave the year prefix change at August, at least for 1987. The review is now under way.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 1 April 1987

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Commission Members

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list those members of the Government who are ex-officio Church Commissioners; and which meetings of the commissioners each of these office holders has attended during the last 15 years.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The information is as follows:

General Meetings Attended

First Lord of the Treasury—None.
Lord President of the Council—None.
Lord Chancellor—None.
Chancellor of the Exchequer—None.
Secretary of State for the Home Department—1986.
Attorney General—None.
Solicitor General—1974; 1975; 1976 (twice); 1977; 1978; 1979; 1980; 1985 (twice); 1986.

SCOTLAND

Riding Centre, Summerston

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to approve the urban aid application submitted through Glasgow district council for the new riding centre for the disabled at Summerston.

Mr. Ancram: Glasgow district council was informed on 27 March that this project has been approved for funding under the urban programme in 1987-88.

Landscape Conservation

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of those organisations which have commented upon the Government's proposals of December 1986 on landscape conservation orders.

Mr. Ancram: The following organisations in Scotland responded with comments to the consultation paper issued by the Department of the Environment entitled "Protecting the Countryside".

Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland.
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.
Countryside Commission for Scotland.
Crofters Commission.
National Farmers' Union of Scotland.
National Trust for Scotland.
Scottish Landowners' Federation.
Scottish Wildlife Trust.

AIDS

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to deal with correspondence inquiring about advertising expenditure on AIDS, referred by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill on 17 February.

Mr. John Mackay: My noble Friend the Minister of State has written to the hon. Member.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Research and Development

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the percentage increase in gross research and development expenditure in Britain in real terms since 1979; and what is the position of Britain in real terms compared with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is given in the table.

Increase in gross domestic expenditure on research and development (GERD) adjusted for changes in prices: 1983 compared with 1978 or 1979 for some OECD member countries

	Percentage increase in GERD
United Kingdom	12·3
Australia	19·8
Canada	29·8
Finland	43·9
France	24·0
Germany	8·1
Iceland	14·0
Ireland	9·1
Italy	36·3
Japan	42·5
Netherlands	7·6
Norway	15·4
Spain	27·6
Sweden	38·4
Switzerland	0·4
United States	19·2

Source: OECD.

Note: Increases are over the four-year period 1979 to 1983, except for United Kingdom and Australia, the five-year period 1978 to 1983.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the United Kingdom share of European Economic Community exports of goods in Standard Industrial Trade Classifications 5, 6, 7 and 8, respectively, in 1979, 1985 and the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available; and what information he has as to how these compare with the share held by Germany, France and Italy.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year from 1957 gross and net domestic fixed capital formation by manufacturing industry at current and at 1980 prices.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *361*]: The requested information is shown in the following table:

Gross and net domestic fixed capital formation by manufacturing industry at current and 1980 prices

£ million

Year	GDFCF		NDFCF	
	Current prices	1980 prices	Current prices	1980 prices
1957	884	5,020	438	2,557
1958	863	4,741	387	2,172
1959	847	4,657	355	1,982
1960	1,016	5,542	495	2,741
1961	1,244	6,502	672	3,630
1962	1,181	6,118	563	2,990
1963	1,058	5,286	398	2,013
1964	1,221	5,981	514	2,563
1965	1,413	6,637	638	3,043
1966	1,483	6,674	637	2,887
1967	1,413	6,322	524	2,349
1968	1,569	6,798	616	2,641
1969	1,774	7,412	729	3,057
1970	2,089	7,966	901	3,395
1971	2,102	7,276	727	2,496
1972	1,968	6,331	434	1,377
1973	2,356	6,792	597	1,675
1974	3,062	7,435	392	2,132
1975	3,458	6,781	687	1,304
	(3,646)	(7,138)		
1976	3,910	6,475	541	851
	(4,146)	(6,844)		
1977	4,730	6,774	734	1,001
	(5,083)	(7,254)		
1978	5,624	7,221	1,033	1,291
	(6,169)	(7,905)		
1979	6,515	7,496	1,243	1,399
	(7,154)	(8,230)		
1980	6,478	6,478	237	237
	(7,313)	(7,313)		
1981	5,318	4,865	−1,536	−1,447
	(6,236)	(5,697)		
1982	5,480	4,704	−1,822	−1,629
	(6,522)	(5,600)		
1983	5,854	4,780	−1,810	−1,562
	(6,820)	(5,558)		
1984	7,341	5,762	−675	−595
	(8,429)	(6,599)		
1985	7,950	5,852	−651	−524
	(9,498)	(6,971)		

Notes:

1. Except for the figures in brackets, which include leased assets, the table excludes expenditure on assets leased to manufacturers from the financial industries, since this information is not available for net domestic fixed capital formation nor, before 1975, for gross domestic fixed capital formation. Prior to 1975 finance leasing to manufacturers is thought to have been small or negligible.

2. Figures of net domestic fixed capital formation for 1986 are not yet available.

Sources: Business Statistics Office, Central Statistical Office and CSO Blue Book.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in which years since 1957 gross fixed investment in plant and machinery in manufacturing industry in real terms has exceeded the 1979 level; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing on the basis of 1979 = 100 the amount of real investment in plant and machinery in each year since 1957 by manufacturing industry.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *361*]: Gross fixed investment on plant and machinery at 1980 prices has not exceeded the 1979 level in any year in the period from 1957.

Index of gross fixed investment in plant and machinery in manufacturing industry at 1980 prices (including assets leased to manufacturers from the financial industries)
1979 = 100

Year	Index
1957	51
1958	49
1959	49
1960	57
1961	68
1962	63
1963	56
1964	63
1965	70
1966	72
1967	70
1968	76
1969	80
1970	91
1971	83
1972	72
1973	79
1974	90
1975	88
1976	86
1977	89
1978	94
1979	100
1980	93
1981	74
1982	72
1983	73
1984	85
1985	90
1986	85

Note: Expenditure on assets leased to manufacturers from the financial industries is included from 1975. Prior to this date no figures are available for such expenditure which is thought to be small or negligible.

Source: Business Statistics Office.

Enterprise Education

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, of the funds made available to the Royal Society of Arts during Industry Year 1986 to publicise the importance of Enterprise Education, *(a)* how much and *(b)* what proportion of the total amount was spent on (i) publicity materials in schools in the United Kingdom (ii) publicity materials in schools in Wales and (iii) publicity materials in the Welsh language.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 March 1987]: The Government made funds available to the Royal Society for the encouragement of arts, manufacturers and commerce, during Industry Year 1986, to increase awareness of the role of industry and its service to the community. These were spent on all aspects of the campaign. £300,000 (29 per cent.), exclusive of staff costs, design and other overheads was spent on materials for schools in the United Kingdom. These were distributed to all schools including those in Wales. Figures for supply to schools in Wales cannot be separately identified. £11,696 (1·1 per cent.) was spent on translating and printing schools materials in the Welsh language.

DEFENCE

British Military Hospital, Dharan

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the full costs of running the British military hospital in Dharan, Nepal in 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *382*]: The full running costs of the British military hospital Dharan, Nepal were:

Financial year	£
1984-85	1,153,600
1985-86	1,362,300

Figures are reported by financial years only.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the British military hospital in Dharan, Nepal.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *382*]: All defence programmes, including those in Nepal, are kept constantly under review. However, no decision has been taken on the future of BMH Dharan.

PRIME MINISTER

Road Safety

Mr. Sheerman asked the Prime Minister what action she purposes to take, in the light of her message to the member states of the European Community, the Commission and the European Parliament in European Road Safety Year, to implement and seek further solutions aimed at reducing the frequency and severity of road accident casualties both nationally and in conjunction with European Economic Community members.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will soon be reporting to Parliament the outcome of the Government's review of road safety policy. The main conclusion to emerge from the review—that available resources be directed towards proven and cost-effective means of reducing road casualties—is already being reflected in increased funding for low-cost road safety engineering and for road safety research.

Within the Community we shall continue to work with our partners on issues which require action at international level, particularly vehicle safety. We are also expanding bilateral exchanges where we can learn from the experience of countries which have developed effective ways of reducing casualties.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Gazumping

58. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Attorney-General what steps he proposes to take to stop the practice of gazumping in England and Wales.

The Attorney-General: The Law Commission's report on "Subject to Contract" agreements (Law Com. No. 65, published in 1975) concluded that legislation to impose civil or criminal liability for "gazumping" would be counter-productive. The Government hope that buyers and sellers of houses and flats will give favourable consideration to the pre-contract deposit agreement recommended by the conveyancing standing committee in January last.

Court Proceedings (Documentary Evidence)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Attorney-General what representations he has received on proposals to give the judiciary a complete discretion to decide whether documents given in evidence in court should remain confidential; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: By the close of the consultation period on 20 March the Lord Chancellor had received 27 replies to his consultation paper proposing amendments to the "Rules of the Supreme Court" to give effect to the friendly settlement reached in the case brought by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) against the United Kingdom. Six of those replies express the view that the amendments give too much discretion to the judges. Changes will be considered in the light of the comments received, but it is an express term of the settlement that it will continue to be possible for a document to be subject to an order preventing its disclosure otherwise than to the parties to the action.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers (Medical Protection)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the procedure laid down by his Department for the protection of the prison officers involved with prisoners in the custody of Her Majesty's prisons who are known to be AIDS victims or carriers of that virus;

(2) if he will make a statement on the procedure laid down by his Department for the protection of the prison officers involved with prisoners in the custody of Her Majesty's Government who are known to be hepatitis B victims or carriers of that virus.

Mr. Mellor: The procedural guidance issued by the prison department provides for infected prisoners who are ill (in the acute phase of hepatitis B infection or suffering from symptoms of AIDS or an AIDS-related condition) to be located either in a prison hospital or removed to National Health Service facilities. For both hepatitis B and HIV carriers who are asymptomatic certain regime restrictions have been advised, the precise restrictions applied in a particular case being a matter for the medical officer. Arrangements have also been introduced which enable appropriate staff to be informed, in such a way that medical confidentiality is preserved, of cases in which restrictions have been applied. Other measures taken include guidance on procedures to be followed in the event of incidents involving risk of exposure to infection, and the introduction of arrangements under which health care staff are offered the opportunity to be vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements exist within his

Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisation, for dealing with his responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Mr. Hurd: I have well established consultative and other arrangements for assisting in the discharge of my duties with regard to the various services for which I have responsibility. However, these generally relate to England and Wales as a whole and it would not be possible to identify separately those relating exclusively to Greater London or the numbers of staff which are involved.

Seven officials work full-time on duties in connection with my responsibilities for the Metropolitan police. But the police department is organised on a functional basis and all its officials are available to advise me depending on the matter under consideration.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department with which Departments and non-departmental bodies his Department, and its related non-departmental public bodies, has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Hurd: I regularly consult many other Government Departments and non-departmental bodies in connection with the discharge of my duties; these consultations take place as and when necessary. The Treasury and the Department of the Environment are consulted regularly on aspects of Metropolitan police resources. It would be possible to provide the other detailed information requested only at disproportionate expense.

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Mr. Hurd: No.

Airports (Passport Checking)

Mr. Bill Walker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to include airlines in the bodies authorised to inspect intending passenger passports;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to allow airlines the right to inspect passports of intending passengers.

Mr. Waddington: Airlines are already able to examine the documents of passengers leaving the United Kingdom on their flights. We have no plans to introduce legislation for this purpose.

Prisoners (Violence)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many attacks there have been by one prisoner on another in any penal establishment in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available in the form requested. The following table relates to adjudications in prison department establishments in each of the years 1981 to 1985 where an inmate was charged with an offence of gross personal violence to another inmate, or of assault upon another inmate, or with an attempt to commit such an offence.

Number of offences

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Gross personal violence to inmate:					
Charge proved	66	68	62	39	37
Referred to police	16	29	31	21	22
Adjudication not completed	2	2	1	1	—
Charge dismissed	8	12	11	13	11
Sub-total	92	111	105	74	70
Attempted gross personal violence:					
Charge proved	11	10	7	7	7
Referred to police	—	—	—	—	1
Adjudication not completed	—	—	—	—	—
Charge dismissed	—	1	—	—	—
Sub-total	11	11	7	7	8
Assault on inmate:					
Charge proved	2,096	1,876	1,830	1,657	1,774
Referred to police	7	11	16	12	26
Adjudication not completed	10	11	9	10	13
Charge dismissed	132	119	152	151	156
Sub-total	2,245	2,017	2,007	1,830	1,969
Attempted assault:					
Charge proved	99	50	32	23	46
Referred to police	—	—	—	—	1
Adjudication not completed	—	—	—	—	—

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Charge dismissed	—	1	5	1	4
Sub-total	99	51	37	24	51
Total	2,447	2,190	2,156	1,935	2,098

Corresponding figures for 1986 are not at present available.

Rate Defaulters

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rate defaulters have been sent to prison in each of the last 10 years; and what were the average maximum and minimum sentences.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the number of persons received on committal by magistrates' courts in default of payment of rates in each of the last 11 years is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (table 6.2 of the latest volume, for 1985, Cmnd. 9903). The following table gives details of the length of committal of those received in 1975, 1980 and 1985 on committal by all courts. Further information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost. Data for 1986 are not yet available.

Persons received into Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on committal for non payment of rates: by length of committal and type of court 1975, 1980 and 1985

Number of persons[1]

Length of committal	1975		1980		1985	
	Magistrates' courts	County courts	Magistrates' courts	County courts	Magistrates' courts	County courts
Up to one week	2	4	6	—	9	1
Over one up to two weeks	22	15	33	3	38	3
Over two up to three weeks	11	1	12	1	30	2
Over three weeks up to one month	58	4	120	2	115	3
Over one up to two months	93	1	95	—	83	—
Over two up to three months	117	—	152	1	78	1
Over three up to six months	11	—	1	—	1	—
Over six months	—	—	—	—	—	—
Not recorded	4	—	—	—	—	—
Total	318	25	419	7	354	10

[1] Based on information recorded centrally, which is approximate. Checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

South West Africa People's Organisation

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any complaints in the last year concerning Oxfam's alleged support in the United Kingdom of the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Mr. Mellor: Correspondence has recently been received mentioning a possible link between Oxfam and the South West Africa People's Organisation. This is being considered by the Charity Commission.

Charities (Political Activities)

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any complaints concerning the alleged political activities of charities, and of Oxfam in particular.

Mr. Mellor: Such complaints are received from time to time. They are a matter for the Charity Commission which has issued detailed guidelines on political activities by charities.

Immigration

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases since 1983 he has refused to accept a recommendation from an adjudicator that he reconsider an application outside the immigration rules.

Mr. Waddington: Whenever an adjudicator makes such a recommendation, the case is always fully and carefully reconsidered. Any decision not to exercise the use of discretion in an appellant's favour outside the immigration rules is taken at a senior level in the immigration department or, where appropriate or where an hon. Member has made representations on the appellant's behalf, at ministerial level. Statistics of the outcome of such cases are not separately maintained.

Mr. John Fleming

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to seek to secure the extradition from the United States of Mr. John Fleming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Fleming was deported from the United States to this country on 26 March.

Police Computers

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with, and what advice was received from, the Data Protection Registrar relating to the accessibility of fingerprints held on police computers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. We are satisfied that the arrangements for access to fingerprint images held on police computers comply with the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with, and what advice was received from, the Data Protection Registrar in relation to the proposed new police computers; and if he has any plans to amend the Data Protection Act in consequence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Police computer systems are subjects to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 and any new application on the police national computer (or any other police computer which contains personal data) will be registered, as appropriate, under the Act.

Animal Procedures Committee

Mr. Gale asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now announce the composition of the Animal Procedures Committee under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Hurd: I have now appointed the Animal Procedures Committee under section 19 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) At 1986, acting jointly with the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland under section 29 of the Act. The new committee replaces my non-statutory Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments. I am most grateful to all who served on the advisory committee for the invaluable advice they have given to successive Home Secretaries, and to a number of its members for agreeing to join the Animal Procedures Committee, which has been appointed as follows:

Professor D. G. T. Williams (Chairman), Rouse Ball Professor of English Law and President of Wolfson College, Cambridge.

Dr. Michael Balls, Reader in Medical Cell Biology, Nottingham University and Chairman of the Trustees of th Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments.

Mr. Edward Bernard FIAT, Oxford Laboratory Animal Colonies, Bicester.

Mr. Jason Brice, Consultant Neurosurgeon.

Dr. Roger Brimblecombe, Vice President of Smith, Kline and French Laboratories.

Mr. Henry Carter, Veterinary Surgeon.

Dr. Charles Coid, Head of Division of Comparative Medicine, Clinical Research Centre, Northwick Park, Harrow.

Professor Anthony Dayan, Professor of Toxicology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College.

Professor Gordon Dunstan, formerly Professor of Moral Theology, King's College, London.

Mr. Roger Ewbank, Director of the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare.

Mr. T. G. Field-Fisher, QC, Chairman of RSPCA Legal Committee.

Dr. Judith Hampson, formerly Animal Experimentation Officer of the RSPCA, now freelance Consultant.

Mr. Clive Hollands, Secretary to the Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation.

Sir Andrew Huxley OM FRS, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge.

Professor Sheila Jennett, Professor of Physiology, Glasgow University.

Dr. John Ledingham, Reader in Medicine, Oxford University.

Dr. Brian Newbould, Research Director of ICI Pharmaceuticals.

Professor Lawson Soulsby, Professor of Animal Pathology, Cambridge University and past-President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Professor Peter Venables, Professor of Psychology at York University.

We intend to make one further appointment to the committee presently.

It is the committee's duty under the Act to advise me and the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland on such matters concerned with the Act and our functions under it as the committee may determine or as we may refer to it. The committee is required in its consideration of any matter to have regard both to the legitimate requirements of science and industry and to the protection of animals against avoidable suffering and unnecessary use in scientific procedures; and to make an annual report on its activities. I am required to lay the report before Parliament and, under section 21of the Act, to consult the committee before issuing or altering guidance on the operation of the Act and codes of practice on the care and use of animals. The advice of the committee will also be sought on all applications for licences for projects involving cosmetics, microsurgery, and the testing of tobacco products on conscious animals. I am very grateful to Professor Williams and all his colleagues for letting us have the benefit of their considerable expertise in the new committee which has a most important role to play in the rigorous system of controls established by the Act.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his Department's recently published crime statistics.

Mr. Mellor: A number of letters from members of the public have been received in the Department about the latest statistics. Figures are, however, not readily available.

Channel Islands (Defence and International Representation)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the response of the island authorities of Jersey and Guernsey to the Government's request for the islands to make voluntary annual contributions towards the costs of defence and international representation undertaken by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: I am pleased to announce that both Jersey and Guernsey have responded positively to the request.

As from 1 April 1987, Guernsey will assume from Her Majesty's Government the responsibility for the maintenance of the Alderney breakwater (completed in 1865 to shelter the British fleet, make an annual contribution towards the cost of maintaining the Royal Naval port headquarters in Guernsey and remit fees collected for the issue of passports in Guernsey, in all amounting to approximately £700,000 in 1987-88.

In determining the form of its contribution, Jersey has voted to establish on the island a Territoral Army unit whose costs it will bear. Detailed discussions on the

feasibility of this are being undertaken urgently between representatives of the Jersey States and the Ministry of Defence. In the interim, Jersey has made a cash contribution of £800,000.

Agreement has also been reached with both island authorities that they should pay the costs of international representation undertaken by the United Kingdom specifically on the islands' behalf.

ENERGY

Waddilove Report

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Energy with which individuals and organisations he has had consultations about the recommendations of the Waddilove report on subsidence damage.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I have consulted colleagues in other Government Departments, the National Farmers Union and British Coal. We have also received written representations from a range of individuals and interested organisations.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount paid out in state benefits, including mortgage interest relief, to people earning more than *(a)* the national average wage and *(b)* two thirds of the national average wage at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: In 1985-86, the estimated cost of mortgage interest relief in the United Kingdom to people with taxable incomes above two thirds average gross adult male full-time earnings (£130) was £4 billion. About £3 billion of this was to people with taxable incomes above average earnings (£195). On the same income basis, the corresponding social security expenditures in Great Britain were £7·2 billion and £3·9 billion in 1985.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to raise the level of the amount of charitable income that can be disregarded for supplementary benefit purposes.

Mr. Major: We have no plans to raise the level of the amount of charitable income that can be disregarded for supplementary benefit purposes. However, we shall be putting forward proposals to increase the amount of any voluntary or charitable payment that can be disregarded in the new income support scheme from April 1988 from £4 to £5 a week. The disregard level will apply also to the new housing benefit and family credit schemes.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for tables 5.14 and 5.15 of the latest issue of "Social Trends" the median figure for gross earnings on the horizontal axis and the actual figures and percentages for each category on the vertical axis at that level of earnings.

Mr. Major: The information is as follows:

July 1986

	Median earnings[1] £	*Total income support*[2] £	*Replacement ratio*[3] *percentage*
Family type			
Single person (householder)	187	100·06	30
Married couple	187	107·42	45
Married couple with one child (aged 3)	187	112·17	56
Married couple with two children (aged 4 and 6)	187	117·52	64
Married couple with three children (aged 3, 8, 11)	187	124·62	74
Married couple with four children (aged 3, 8, 11, and 16)	187	131·72	86
Single person with one child (aged 3)	125	78·33	56

[1] Estimated median earnings at July 1986 for:
adult *male* full-time employees for all family types except single person plus child
adult *female* full-time employees for single person plus child.

[2] Net income (including the value of benefits in kind) less housing costs and travel to work expenses — referred to as "net weekly spending power" in *Social Trends*.

[3] Total income support (TIS) out of work and receiving supplementary benefit as a percentage of TIS in work.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many places there are in local authority homes and hostels for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people.

Mrs. Currie: The Department's booklets "Homes and Hostels for the Mentally Ill and the Mentally Handicapped", copies of which have been placed in the Library, give the number of places provided for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people in homes and hostels provided by local authority social services departments at 31 March each year. The latest available figures, for 31 March 1985, are 4,363 places for mentally ill people and 15,152 places for mentally handicapped people.

The hon. Member will be aware that the great majority of mentally ill people who are living in the community live in ordinary family homes. Others have their home in housing, including group homes, provided by local authority housing departments. We cannot give figures as these are not identified in central statistics. Mentally handicapped people similarly live in a range of alternative forms of housing, including small NHS units in the community.

Cancer

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of deaths in England and Wales from each form of cancer, broken down for men and women, for each of the last 10 years up to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: The information is contained in table 2 of the OPCS annual volume "Mortality Statistics—cause", England and Wales, series DH2 (Her Majesty's Stationery Office). Copies for each year 1976-84 inclusive can be found in the Library. The figures for 1985 are shown in the table.

ICD	*Cause of Death*		*All ages*
140-239	Neoplasms	M	74,324
		F	67,294
140-149	Malignant neoplasm of lip, oral cavity and pharynx	M	1,003
		F	694
140	Malignant neoplasm of lip	M	23
		F	9
141	Malignant neoplasm of tongue	M	229
		F	163
142	Malignant neoplasm of major salivary glands	M	88
		F	75
143	Malignant neoplasm of gum	M	58
		F	43
144	Malignant neoplasm of floor of mouth	M	66
		F	40
145	Malignant neoplasm of other and unspecified parts of mouth	M	115
		F	87
146	Malignant neoplasm of oropharynx	M	128
		F	54
147	Malignant neoplasm of nasopharynx	M	82
		F	45
148	Malignant neoplasm of hypopharynx	M	127
		F	127
149	Malignant neoplasm of other and ill-defined sites within the lip, oral cavity and pharynx	M	87
		F	51
150-159	Malignant neoplasm of digestive organs and peritoneum	M	21,478
		F	19,660
150	Malignant neoplasm of oesophagus	M	2,719
		F	1,851
151	Malignant neoplasm of stomach	M	5,922
		F	4,049
152	Malignant neoplasm of small intestine, including duodenum	M	130
		F	113
153	Malignant neoplasm of colon	M	4,923
		F	6,364
154	Malignant neoplasm of rectum, rectosigmoid junction and anus	M	3,289
		F	2,751
155	Malignant neoplasm of liver and intrahepatic bile ducts	M	680
		F	499
156	Malignant neoplasm of gallbladder and extrahepatic bile ducts	M	329
		F	632
157	Malignant neoplasm of pancreas	M	3,063
		F	3,014
158	Malignant neoplasm of retroperitoneum and peritoneum	M	109
		F	69
159	Malignant neoplasm of other and ill-defined sites within the digestive organs and peritoneum	M	314
		F	318
160-165	Malignant neoplasm of respiratory and intrathoracic organs	M	27,124
		F	10,139
160	Malignant neoplasm of nasal cavities, middle ear and accessory sinuses	M	100
		F	89
161	Malignant neoplasm of larynx	M	669
		F	166
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	M	25,994
		F	9,798
163	Malignant neoplasm of pleura	M	325
		F	42
164	Malignant neoplasm of thymus, heart and mediastinum	M	34
		F	43
165	Other malignant neoplasms within the respiratory system and intrathoracic organs	M	2
		F	1
170-175	Malignant neoplasm of bone, connective tissue, skin and breast	M	1,206
		F	14,600
170	Malignant neoplasm of bone and articular cartilage	M	153
		F	120
171	Malignant neoplasm of connective and other soft tissue	M	256
		F	236
172	Malignant melanoma of skin	M	455
		F	532
173	Other malignant neoplasm of skin	M	263
		F	199
174	Malignant neoplasm of female breast	F	13,513
175	Malignant neoplasm of male breast	M	79
179-189	Malignant neoplasm of genitourinary organs	M	11,451
		F	10,150
179	Malignant neoplasm of uterus, part unspecified	F	517
180	Malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri	F	1,957
181	Malignant neoplasm of placenta	F	2
182	Malignant neoplasm of body of uterus	F	1,018
183	Malignant neoplasm of ovary and other uterine adnexa	F	3,843
184	Malignant neoplasm of other and unspecified female genital organs	F	540
185	Malignant neoplasm of prostate	M	6,628
186	Malignant neoplasm of testis	M	112
187	Malignant neoplasm of penis and other male genital organs	M	129
188	Malignant neoplasm of bladder	M	3,251
		F	1,418
189	Malignant neoplasm of kidney and other and unspecified urinary organs	M	1,331
		F	855
190-199	Malignant neoplasm of other and unspecified sites	M	6,506
		F	6,773
191	Malignant neoplasm of brain	M	1,472
		F	1,099
192	Malignant neoplasm of other and unspecified parts of nervous system	M	18
		F	35
193	Malignant neoplasm of thyroid gland	M	106
		F	247
194	Malignant neoplasm of other endocrine glands and related structures	M	65
		F	56
195	Malignant neoplasm of other and ill-defined sites	M	172
		F	322
199	Malignant neoplasm without specification of site	M	4,591
		F	4,946
200-208	Malignant neoplasm of lymphatic and haematopoietic tissue	M	4,716
		F	4,322
200	Lymphosarcoma and reticulosarcoma	M	131
		F	133
201	Hodgkin's disease	M	261
		F	194
202	Other malignant neoplasm of lymphoid and histiocytic tissue	M	1,345
		F	1,246
203	Multiple myeloma and immunoproliferative neoplasms	M	1,019
		F	1,013
204	Lymphoid leukaemia	M	727
		F	551
205	Myeloid leukaemia	M	1,040
		F	978
206	Monocytic leukaemia	M	40
		F	45
207	Other specified leukaemia	M	28
		F	31
208	Leukaemia of unspecified cell type	M	125
		F	131
210-229	Benign neoplasms	M	185
		F	327
210	Benign neoplasm of lip, oral cavity and pharynx	M	5
		F	2
211	Benign neoplasm of other parts of digestive system	M	17
		F	21
212	Benign neoplasm of respiratory and intrathoracic organs	M	8
		F	12

ICD	Cause of Death		All ages
213	Benign neoplasm of bone and articular cartilage	M	1
		F	3
214	Lipoma	M	4
		F	1
215	Other benign neoplasm of connective and other soft tissue	M	8
		F	10
216	Benign neoplasm of skin	M	4
		F	1
217	Benign neoplasm of breast	M	—
		F	1
218	Uterine leiomyoma	F	15
219	Other benign neoplasm of uterus	F	2
220	Benign neoplasm of ovary	F	19
222	Benign neoplasm of male genital organs	M	1
223	Benign neoplasm of kidney and other urinary organs	M	2
		F	2
225	Benign neoplasm of brain and other parts of nervous system	M	88
		F	173
226	Benign neoplasm of thyroid gland	M	2
		F	2
227	Benign neoplasm of other endocrine glands and related structures	M	29
		F	46
228	Haemangioma and Lymphangioma, any site	M	14
		F	14
229	Benign neoplasm of other and unspecified sites	M	2
		F	3
230-234	Carcinoma in situ	M	1
		F	2
230	Carcinoma in situ of digestive organs	M	1
		F	—
232	Carcinoma in situ of skin	M	—
		F	1
233	Carcinoma in situ of breast and genitourinary system	M	—
		F	1
235-238	Neoplasms of uncertain behaviour	M	225
		F	222
235	Neoplasm of uncertain behaviour of digestive and respiratory systems	M	31
		F	30
236	Neoplasm of uncertain behaviour of genitourinary organs	M	11
		F	11
237	Neoplasm of uncertain behaviour of endocrine glands and nervous system	M	38
		F	41
238	Neoplasm of uncertain behaviour of other and unspecified sites and tissues	M	145
		F	140
239	Neoplasm of unspecified nature	M	429
		F	405

Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in the current year concerning the implementations of the Disabled Persons Act 1986.

Mr. Major: Since the beginning of 1987, 60 written representations have been received from organisations or individuals relating to implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. I also met representatives of the local authority associations on 24 February to discuss a number of issues relating to the implementation of the Act and today, at their request, I met members of the steering group of major disability organisations which has been set up to monitor implementation.

Fluoridation

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what financial assistance has been given from central Government funds for the capital costs of the installation of fluoridation plants following the passage of the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985;

(2) what additional public expenditure has arisen from the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985.

Mrs. Currie: There has been no additional public expenditure arising from the passage of the Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985. The Department has continued to provide some financial assistance to health authorities with the capital costs of fluoridation schemes that were agreed prior to 1985, as it has done since 1975. In the financial year 1985-86 this assistance amounted to £285,000 and to £262,000 in the current financial year.

Pensioners (Benefits)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the cost in a full year at 1987-88 rates of *(a)* increasing the state pension by £5 per week for single and £8 for married persons, respectively, and *(b)* increasing supplementary benefits for pensioners between mid-December and the end of March by £5 per week to cover fuel bills.

Mr. Major: The estimated cost *(a)* of increasing the state pension (retirement, invalidity and widow's pension, supplementary pension and the linked needs allowance for housing benefit) by £5 a week for single and £8 a week for married persons would be £2·7 billion in a full year, *(b)* of paying £5 a week between mid-December and the end of March to those pensioners currently receiving supplementary benefit would be £150 million; there could also be a substantial extra cost in respect of other pensioners who would then become entitled to supplementary pension during the winter months.

Motability

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to review the criteria for eligibility to Motability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Motability is an independent voluntary organsiation set up in 1977 with Government support, specifically to help disabled people in receipt of mobility allowance to exchange the cash benefit for a vehicle.

In view of Motability's independent status any review of the criteria for eligibility under the scheme would be essentially a matter for Motability itself in conjuction with the Department which meets the organisation's administration expenses. There are, however, no plans for such a review at present.

Benefits (Age Limit)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the age at which young people are entitled to claim social security payments on their own behalf in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other OECD countries.

Mr. Major: In all countries social security payments under contributory benefits schemes depend primarily on the individual's contribution record, which is normally a function of length of time in covered employment. The minimum age for the payment of contributions to the United Kingdom national insurance scheme is 16.

Payment of non-contributory benefits is much more various. The age at which child allowance ceases ranges

between 16 and 27 in the countries referred to, and is linked with the status—student, trainee or other—of the young person. This clearly influences the age at which social welfare payments can be made available to the young person on his own behalf. There may in any case be a gap between the end of the child allowance and entitlement (if any) to welfare payments during which a young person is still considered dependent on his parents. In some countries (for example, United States of America, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland) young people without dependants have no entitlement to social welfare payments.

In the United Kingdom child benefit continues to age 19 if the young person is in non-advanced education. Young people aged over 16 are eligible to claim supplementary benefit in their own right from fixed dates at the end of the holiday following the term in which they complete their full-time non-advanced education.

NHS Finance

Mr. Peter Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been total National Health Service spending in monetary and real terms annually since 1974 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* for the Wessex regional health authority area and *(c)* following reorganisation, for the Portsmouth and Southampton district health authority areas; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures between capital and revenue expenditure in each case.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether any consideration is being given to amending supplementary benefit regulations for people aged over 50 years to allow higher part-time earnings before supplementary benefit is reduced; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the cost of raising the earnings limit to £20 per week for people aged over 50 years, before supplementary benefit is reduced; how many people he estimates would benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: We have no present plans to increase the amount that people, including those aged over 50, can earn before supplementary benefit is reduced. To increase the limit to £20 for all those in this age group including those who are already receiving supplementary benefit would give increased entitlement to some 35,000 people at a cost of £20 million a year. We do not have a reliable estimate of the number who might be brought into entitlement or what the additional cost might be.

For the future we have announced proposals for changes in the levels of disregards of earnings in the income support scheme that replaces supplementary benefit from April 1988. The standard disregard would be increased from £4 to £5 a week although the separate disregard of work expenses would end. There would be a higher disregard of £15 a week for couples who have been unemployed two years, lone parents and those qualifying for the disability premium.

Social Security Advisory Committee (Report)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Social Security Advisory Committee will be publishing its next annual report.

Mr. Lyell: I understand that the Social Security Advisory Committee's Fifth Report is being published today. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

Cervical and Breast Cancer Screening

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further action he is taking to ensure the effective implementation of the Government's policies for cervical and breast cancer screening.

Mr. Fowler: I have asked Sir Roy Griffiths, deputy chairman of the NHS management board, to lead a small team whose task will be to oversee the implementation of the Government's policy on cervical and breast cancer screening.

Sir Roy and his team will be working with health authorities and family practitioner committees to make sure that they have viable plans, not only for installing computerised call and recall systems, but also to improve take-up of screening and to follow up when women do not respond after being called for screening.

I shall be asking Sir Roy to make regular reports to me so that I can keep the House informed, particularly about progress towards the target date of 31 March 1988 for the cervical cancer screening service throughout England.

TRANSPORT

Noise Insulation Regulations 1975

56. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to amend the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Later this year we will be laying before the House a minor amendment to the Noise Insulation Regulations in the form of a revision of the 1975 edition of "Calculation of Road Traffic Noise". This technical memorandum is prescribed in regulation 6. It sets out the method and procedure for ascertaining noise levels for the purposes of the regulations.

We are considering other possible amendments to the regulations.

National Bus Company

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the sale prices of National Bus Company subsidiaries sold off so far.

Mr. David Mitchell: The prices obtained for individual National Bus Company subsidiaries are confidential while sales are in progress. A report will be made to the House in due course on the aggregate proceeds of sale.

Witchford Bypass

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the proposed opening date of the Witchford bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Witchford lies on the A142 principal road. It is for Cambridgeshire county council, as highway authority, to determine when a bypass should be built and opened.

Road Accidents

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads in the last year in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Road accident information for 1986 will not be available before May 1987. The local authorities concerned may have provisional estimates and my hon. Friend may wish to get in touch with them. Data for 1985 can be found in "Road Accidents Great Britain 1985". A copy is in the Library.

London Underground (Accidents)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many reported accidents have occurred during the past 12 months on trains without guards on the London Transport underground system.

Mr. David Mitchell: Excluding minor injury accidents (which are reported on bulk returns and cannot be related to specific trains or lines) there have been no reported accidents on these trains during the past 12 months.

Exeter-Exmouth Relief Road

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to bring forward the construction of the new Exeter to Exmouth relief road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The improvement of the A376 Exeter-Exmouth route is a matter for Devon county council as local highway authority.

Wheelchair Passengers

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport which existing construction and United Kingdom regulations apply to community transport vehicles used for conveying wheelchair-bound passengers; if he intends to introduce fresh regulations applying only to new vehicles of this type; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following the recent consultation with interested organisations we shall shortly be issuing a new code of practice on the carriage of passengers in wheelchairs on buses. This new code makes no distinction between community transport vehicles, public service vehicles and private vehicles. It represents the best advice available on how to secure people in wheelchairs on buses. There are no plans to make special regulations for vehicles used to carry people in wheelchairs.

Channel Tunnel Roads (War Cemeteries)

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the implications for British war graves in France of the routes proposed for the construction of certain new roads for Channel tunnel traffic; and what reply he has made.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has received two representations on this subject. This is primarily a matter for the French Government, but my understanding is that proposals for new roads connected with the Channel tunnel project could not conceivably affect British war cemeteries in northern France.

Road Assessment Studies (London)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those organisations he has asked to comment on the terms of reference of stage 2 of the road assessment studies for London;

(2) when he intends to publish the first terms of reference of the stage 2 consultation of the road assessment studies for London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All 20 local authorities in the study areas are being consulted and the organisations listed have been asked for their views by 19 June. We will also consider comments from anyone else. The final terms of reference will be published once we have considered comments received.

Association of London Authorities
Automobile Association
British Airports Authority
British Rail
British Road Federation
Campaign to Improve London's Transport
Confederation of British Industry
Freight Transport Association
Friends of the Earth Ltd.
Institution of Civil Engineers
Institution of Highways and Transportation
London Amenity and Transport Association
London Boroughs Association
London Centre for Transport and Planning
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
London Cycling Campaign
London Docklands Development Corporation
London Planning Advisory Committee
London Regional Transport
London and South East Regional Planning Committee
London Taxi Drivers Association
Metropolitan Police
Pedestrians Association
Road Haulage Association
Royal Automobile Club
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment
Transport 2000

Manchester Airport

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what reply he is making to the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority's application for section 56 grant towards the cost of a rail link to Manchester airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for section 56 grant-aid for the Manchester airport rail link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The PTA's application, which I requested in December, was sent to me on 10 March. It does not deal with a number of key issues, such as the way in which it is proposed to share the costs and revenues of the project, and the economic benefits which are claimed to justify the scheme.

I have written today to the chairman of Greater Manchester PTA pointing out these deficiencies and proposing an early meeting between officials to consider the further work which is required.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grants

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the cost of reducing by one year the age of independence for student grants.

Mr. Walden: The estimated cost of reducing the age of independence to 24 is £3 million.

Higher Education

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the percentage of the higher education budget that is allocated to student maintenance in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other OECD countries.

Mr. Walden: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the percentage of students in higher education who are living other than in the parental home in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other OECD countries.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Nursery Education

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of three-year-old and what proportion of four-year-old children receive nursery education.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The proportion of three-year-old children receiving education in maintained nursery schools and in nursery classes in maintained primary schools in England in January 1986 was 32 per cent. The corresponding proportion for four-year-olds was 14 per cent. since the majority of this age group are in infant classes.

Class Sizes

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the number of classes and of pupils in classes of more than 35 pupils for each year since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The number of classes with more than 35 pupils and the number of pupils in these classes in maintained primary and secondary schools in England each year since 1979 is given in the table. The analyses are in respect of classes taught by one teacher on a specified period on the day of the census count in January of each year. The figures may not be representative of the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

January each year	*One teacher classes with more than 35 pupils*	*Pupils in these classes*
1979	6,727	253,198
1980	5,078	192,651
1981	4,313	162,974
1982	4,028	152,508
1983	3,433	130,497
1984	2,926	111,126
1985	2,892	110,307
1986	2,768	106,984

Education Expenditure

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how the population of total public expenditure devoted to the education budget in Britain compares with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries;

(2) how the proportion of gross domestic product spent on the education budget compares with the proportion spent in other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The readily available information is shown in the following table.

Country	*Year*	*Total educational expenditure As percentage of gross national product*[1]	*Total educational expenditure As percentage of total government expenditure*[1]
Australia	1983	6·0	13·6
Austria	1984	5·9	8·0
Belgium[2]	1984	6·0	13·8
Canada	1984	7·4	15·2
Denmark	1984	6·5	..
	1980	6·9	9·5
Finland	1983	5·7	13·1
France[3]	1982	5·8	..
Germany	1983	4·5	8·8
Greece	1982	2·6	..
	1979	2·2	8·4
Iceland[4]	1975	4·1	12·2
Ireland	1983	6·9	9·7
Italy	1983	5·7	9·6
Japan	1982	5·7	19·1
Luxembourg	1983	5·3	14·1
Netherlands	1982	7·7	..
New Zealand	1984	4·9	..
	1980	5·5	14·5
Norway	1983	7·0	12·9
Portugal	1982	4·8	..
	[2]1975	4·0	11·2
Spain	1982	2·5	..
	1979	2·6	16·4
Sweden	1984	8·0	12·2
Switzerland	1983	5·1	18·8
Turkey	1984	2·5	..
	1980	2·7	10·5
United Kingdom	1983	5·3	11·5
United States of America	1981	6·7	..
	1975	6·5	18·1
Yugoslavia	1983	3·9	..
	1980	5·0	32·5

[1] *Sources:* UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1986, 1985, 1984.
[2] Expenditure of the Ministry of Education only.
[3] Metropolitan France.
[4] Expenditure of Central Government only.

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the expenditure per pupil on books and equipment, in cash and constant prices, each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is given in the following table.

Expenditure per pupil on books and equipment
Primary and Secondary Schools (England)

	Cash terms	*Real terms (1984-85 prices)*
1978-79	18·2	32·4
1979-80	20·2	30·8
1980-81	22·4	28·8

	Cash terms	Real terms (1984-85 prices)
1981-82	25·0	29·2
1982-83	28·6	31·2
1983-84	31·0	32·3
1984-85	32·9	32·9

Note: The cash figures for the earlier years have been repriced to 1984-85 prices using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflator.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if any further companies have been approached by his Department to fund city technology colleges; and how many companies have now expressed a willingness to provide funding.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Department has made no entirely fresh approaches to companies since I replied to the hon. Member on 27 February, at column 424, although further progress has been made with some of those which were already discussing the proposals. The answer which I then gave, that I would not confirm offers of support for city technology colleges until sponsors were ready to make their decision public, is still the case.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Official Forms (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that the form, "Stamps L(A) 451," used by Companies House in relation to the conveyancing of land, will now be made available generally in the Welsh language and used automatically in all cases where inquiries are received in Welsh, or where a desire to fill in this form in Welsh is indicated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There has been very little demand for this particular Revenue form in Welsh and the expense of producing one would not appear to be justified. Purchasers may give the particulars required by section 28 Finance Act 1931 in Welsh if they so choose.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with, and what advice was received from, the Data Protection Registrar in relation to the Government data network.

Mr. Brooke: Preliminary discussions with the Data Protection Registrar took place in September last year. A copy of the service requirement for the network was sent to the Registrar in January. He has agreed to advise and assist in relating the operating procedures of the proposed network to the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Growth and Manufacturing Output

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been *(a)* the average rate of growth for the United Kingdom and *(b)* the average rate of growth in manufacturing output in the United Kingdom for the period 1980 to 1986; and what are the comparable figures in the other members of the G7 group.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *394-95*]: The information requested is set out in the table.

Output growth in the G7 countries, 1980 to 1986
(Annual average growth rates, in per cent.)

	Real GDP[1]	Manufacturing
United Kingdom	2·1	0·7
United States of America	2·4	3·0
Japan	3·6	3·3
Germany	1·4	1·2
France	1·3	−0·4
Italy	[2]1·2	[3]−0·6
Canada	2·6	1·5

[1] At market prices.
[2] Includes OECD forecast for 1986.
[3] Up to third quarter 1986.
Source: OECD 'Main Economic Indicators March 1987' 'National Accounts, Volume 1, 1987', CSO 'Economic Trends'.

Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1975, 1979 and 1985 the information given in tables 11.5 and 11.6 of the 1986 edition of the "United Kingdom National Accounts" in terms of 1980 prices.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *396*]: Figures of capital consumption and net domestic fixed capital formation, both at constant 1980 prices, are as follows. Sectoral analyses at constant prices are not available for years up to 1978.

£ million

	1979	1985
Capital consumption at 1980 prices		
Dwellings		
Personal sector	2,510	3,227
Companies	101	109
Public corporations	90	108
Central government	26	27
Local authorities	1,088	1,118
Total	3,815	4,589
Other fixed assets		
Personal sector	3,541	4,102
Companies	12,200	16,277
Public corporations	5,822	4,658
Central government	671	819
Local authorities	1,275	1,410
Total	23,509	27,266
All fixed assets		
Personal sector	6,051	7,329
Companies	12,301	16,386
Public corporations	5,912	4,766
Central government	697	846
Local authorities	2,363	2,528
Total	27,324	31,855
Net domestic fixed capital formation at 1980 prices		
Dwellings		
Personal sector	3,841	3,103
Companies	16	−24

	1979	1985
Public corporations	267	119
Central government	12	12
Local authorities	1,410	610
Total	5,546	3,820
Other fixed assets		
Personal sector	−63	1,270
Companies	8,586	8,140
Public corporations	620	−374
Central government	1,223	1,775
Local authorities	718	−158
Total	11,084	10,653
All fixed assets		
Personal sector	3,778	4,373
Companies	8,602	8,116
Public corporations	887	−255
Central government	1,235	1,787
Local authorities	2,128	452
Total	16,630	14,473

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the years 1975, 1979 and 1985 the information for all fixed assets in table 10.3 of the 1986 edition of the "United Kingdom National Accounts" in terms of 1980 prices.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *396*]: Figures of gross domestic fixed capital formation at constant 1980 prices are as follows. For years up to 1978 only a broad sector analysis of gross domestic fixed capital is available at constant prices. For recent years, from 1979 onwards, slightly more detailed sectoral analyses are available.

Gross domestic fixed capital formation at 1980 prices all fixed assets
£ million

	1975	1979	1985
Personal sector	24,138	9,829	11,702
Companies		20,903	24,502
Public corporations	7,765	6,799	4,511
Central government	9,419	1,932	2,633
Local authorities		4,491	2,980
Total	41,540	43,954	46,328

NORTHERN IRELAND

Milk Quotas

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from what source the extra dairy quota for each of the contending parties in W. and C. Millar versus J. K. Lynn was made available; and on what legal authority it was allocated.

Mr. Viggers: Extra quota is to be made available to W. and C. Millar only. The quota is to be allocated on an extra statutory basis from the regional reserve.

EMPLOYMENT

National Pay Agreements

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General what is his assessment of the implications for *(a)* the level of migration from one part of the United Kingdom to another and *(b)* the level of emigration from the United Kingdom of abolishing national pay agreements.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The ending of national pay agreements will enable employers to pay rates of pay that can be afforded by them and are necessary to recruit and retain staff of the required quality in their own locality. This should help to speed up the growth of employment and reduce regional disparities in unemployment, but I do not believe that it would have any discernible effect on migration or emigration.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Paymaster General if he will make the gathering of information on ethnic origins compulsory, and publish the percentage of entrants to his Department who failed to respond to the ethnic origins questionnaire.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Responsibility for the arrangements for ethnic monitoring in the Civil Service lies with the Management and Personnel Office and these are covered in the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 24 March, at column 98. In the period 1 October 1985 to 31 December 1986, 19·4 per cent. of new entrants to my Department failed to respond either to the ethnic origin questionnaire or a reminder.

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the entrants to the community programme in the 12 months to October 1986 and December 1986 were *(a)* assigned to full-time places, *(b)* men, *(c)* single, *(d)* aged over 25 years, *(e)* unemployed for over 12 months and *(f)* formerly benefit claimants.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is given in the table.

	12 months to October 1986		*12 months to December 1986*	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Total Entrants	301,791		307,405	
(a) Full time	40,440	13·4	40,270	13·1
(b) Male	230,870	76·5	234,242	76·2
(c) Single	239,018	79·2	242,542	78·9
(d) Over age 25	110,153	36·5	114,662	37·3
(e) Unemployed over 12 months	174,737	57·9	179,217	58·3
(f) (i) Former benefit claimants in direct receipt of benefit	290,624	96·3	295,723	96·2
(f) (ii) Former benefit claimants indirectly in receipt of benefit	6,215	2·0	6,348	2·0

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how many community programme filled places were taken by community programme national initiatives in each category, crime, energy, CRS, FCI, NGF, UK2000 tourism for each Manpower Services Commission region at the most recent date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is as follows:

Community Programme
National Initiative Filled Places by Region 27 February 1987

	Filled Places							
	Crime Prevention	*Energy Efficiency*	*Community Refurbishment Scheme*	*Farm and Countryside*	*National Garden Festival*	*UK2000*	*Tourism*	*Total*
South-East	175	484	—	163	—	5	929	1,756
South-West	348	558	—	139	—	—	1,181	2,226
East Midlands	306	409	—	151	—	323	1,161	2,350
Yorkshire and Humberside	598	607	177	477	—	46	1,177	3,082
North-West	1,929	624	167	40	—	218	2,638	5,616
Northern	1,275	442	132	334	—	—	1,470	3,653
Wales	502	896	—	54	—	8	1,418	2,878
Scotland	234	861	—	—	155	—	2,463	3,713
West Midlands	966	481	101	169	—	37	1,304	3,058
London	188	724	—	7	—	94	204	1,217
Total	6,521	6,086	577	1,534	155	731	13,945	29,549

Mr. Meacher asked the Paymaster General how much money has been paid in unemployment benefit to people on the community programme to date.

Mr. Lee: Unemployment benefit is not payable to people working full time on the community programme; in general, those working part time have not been eligible for unemployment benefit because they were regarded as working to their full normal extent. However, they may have qualified for other benefits.

Information about benefits paid to people in part-time work is not available because such claims are not separately identified in the central computer records.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table based on the 1984 and 1985 labour force surveys, for each region in Great Britain and for Greater London, by male/female, and claimant status, the numbers of people who had looked for a job in the four-week reference period, and who were available to start work within two weeks.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The available information by claimant status from the 1984 and 1985 labour force survey is given in the following table. The surveys also showed that 938,000 and 1,080,000 people in 1984 and 1985 respectively were claiming benefits, so counting as unemployed in the monthly count, but either had a job or were not looking for work.

It is not possible to provide a reliable analysis of the regional figures by claimant status.

People without jobs looking for a job in the four week reference period[1] who were available to start work within two weeks
Great Britain

Thousands

	Men		*Women*		*Total*	
	Spring 1984	*Spring 1985*	*Spring 1984*	*Spring 1985*	*Spring 1984*	*Spring 1985*
Claiming benefits	1,581	1,604	536	535	2,117	2,140
Not claiming	257	184	720	645	977	828
Total, Great Britain of which:	1,838	1,788	1,256	1,180	3,094	2,968
South East	416	406	343	301	759	707
(including Greater London)	(202)	(189)	(159)	(135)	(361)	(324)
East Anglia	40	45	34	43	74	87
South West	107	94	89	82	196	175
West Midlands	219	222	134	136	352	357
East Midlands	115	116	73	80	187	196
Yorks and Humberside	175	184	114	118	289	303
North West	277	264	169	161	446	424
North	147	143	89	75	236	217
Wales	110	105	73	62	183	168
Scotland	231	210	140	123	370	333

Note: The figures, from the labour force survey, are subject to sampling errors. In some cases figures may appear not to add because of rounding.
[1] Including some waiting to start a new job already obtained, as in the definition of unemployment using broad ILO guidelines.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table, based on the 1985 labour force survey, showing by region including Greater London, and by male and female, the numbers of people who *(a)* were without jobs and who looked for work in the four weeks before their labour force survey interview and were available to start work within two weeks who (i) wanted full-time jobs, (ii) wanted part-time jobs and (iii) who had no preference, *(b)* were unemployed according to the standard labour force survey definition who were looking for full-time jobs and the number looking for part-time jobs and the number who had no preference, *(c)* were in part-time jobs who

were looking for a different job with longer hours or looking for an additional job, *(d)* were looking for a different job with shorter hours, *(e)* were claimants not unemployed by the definition using broad International Organisation guidelines on the grounds that they were employed, and *(f)* were claimants not unemployed by the conventional labour force survey definition on the grounds that they were employed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The available information is given in the following tables.

(a) People without jobs who had looked for work in the previous four weeks[3] and were available to start within two weeks.

Great Britain Spring 1985 — *Thousands*

	Men seeking:					*Women seeking:*					*All seeking:*				
	Full time work	*Part time work*	*No preference*	*Did not apply[1]*	*Total*	*Full time work*	*Part time work*	*No preference*	*Did not apply[1]*	*Total*	*Full time work*	*Part time work*	*No preference*	*Did not apply[1]*	*Total*
Great Britain	1,424	84	190	89	1,788	455	495	202	28	1,180	1,880	579	392	118	2,968
of which:															
South East	303	31	36	36	406	115	134	40	12	301	417	166	76	48	707
(including Greater London)	135	14	20	19	189	54	56	17	[2]	135	189	71	38	26	324
East Anglia	34	[2]	[2]	[2]	45	14	21	[2]	[2]	43	47	23	13	[2]	87
South West	65	[2]	10	10	94	25	42	14	[2]	82	90	50	24	12	175
West Midlands	183	[2]	27	[2]	222	51	53	30	[2]	136	234	60	57	[2]	357
East Midlands	92	[2]	12	[2]	116	29	38	10	[2]	80	121	44	22	[2]	196
Yorkshire and Humberside	149	[2]	23	[2]	184	43	53	20	[2]	118	193	60	43	[2]	303
North West	214	11	28	11	264	65	60	31	[2]	161	279	72	59	15	424
North	119	[2]	14	[2]	143	29	29	16	[2]	75	149	32	30	[2]	217
Wales	91	[2]	[2]	[2]	105	27	22	13	[2]	62	117	27	19	[2]	168
Scotland	175	[2]	27	[2]	210	57	43	22	[2]	123	232	45	49	[2]	333

Note: The figures are subject to sampling errors. In some cases figures may appear not to add because of rounding.
[1] Those seeking work as self-employed were not asked whether they wished to work full or part time.
[2] Sample size too small to provide a reasonable estimate.
[3] Including some waiting to start a new job already obtained, as in the definition of Unemployment using broad ILO guidelines.

(b) People unemployed according to conventional labour force definition

Great Britain Spring 1985 — *Thousands*

	Men seeking:					*Women seeking:*					*All seeking:*				
	Full time work	*Part time work*	*No preference*	*Did not apply[1]*	*Total*	*Full time work*	*Part time work*	*No preference*	*Did not apply[1]*	*Total*	*Full time work*	*Part time work*	*No preference*	*Did not apply[1]*	*Total*
Great Britain	1,381	62	182	90	1,715	456	414	196	33	1,098	1,837	476	378	122	2,814
of which:															
South East	299	23	34	36	393	124	121	38	13	295	423	144	72	49	688
(including Greater London)	136	12	19	20	187	62	53	18	[2]	140	198	65	38	26	327
East Anglia	33	[2]	[2]	[2]	42	14	15	[2]	[2]	37	47	16	13	[2]	79
South West	63	[2]	10	12	90	25	32	14	[2]	73	88	38	24	14	163
West Midlands	176	[2]	25	[2]	212	49	46	29	[2]	127	226	51	54	[2]	339
East Midlands	89	[2]	12	[2]	111	28	32	10	[2]	73	117	36	22	[2]	183
Yorkshire and Humberside	145	[2]	21	[2]	179	43	39	18	[2]	104	188	46	39	[2]	282
North West	203	[2]	27	[2]	247	62	48	31	[2]	145	265	55	58	13	392
North	114	[2]	12	[2]	134	29	27	16	—	71	143	29	28	[2]	205
Wales	86	[2]	[2]	[2]	101	25	16	13	[2]	56	111	20	21	[2]	157
Scotland	173	[2]	26	[2]	207	56	38	20	[2]	117	229	40	47	[2]	324

Note: The figures are subject to sampling errors. In some cases figures may appear not to add because of rounding.
[1] Those seeking work as self-employed were not asked whether they wished to work full or part time.
[2] Sample size too small to provide a reasonable estimate.
[3] Including some waiting to start a new job already obtained, as in the definition of Unemployment using broad ILO guidelines.

People in part-time employment Great Britain Spring 1985 (thousands)

(c) Looking for a different job with longer hours or for an additional job

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Great Britain of which	113	243	355
South East	35	80	114
(including Greater London)	13	28	40
East Anglia	[1]	13	17
South West	[1]	16	24
West Midlands	14	20	34
East Midlands	[1]	18	26
Yorks and Humberside	[1]	28	37
North West	14	32	46
North	[1]	12	19
Wales	[1]	[1]	13
Scotland	[1]	18	26

[1] Sample size too small to provide a reliable analysis of these figures by region.

(d) Looking for a different job with shorter hours

	Men	*Women*	*Total*
Great Britain[1]	10	17	27

[1] Sample size too small to provide a reliable analysis of these figures by region.
See notes to table *(a)*.

(e) Employed claimants[1] Spring 1985 (thousands)

	Men	Women	Total
Great Britain[2]	108	90	198

[1] Employed according to both broad ILO guidelines and conventional labour force definition.

[2] It is not possible to provide a reliable analysis of these figures by region.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General under what mechanism he proposes to ensure that claimants refusing, or leaving early, a new job training scheme place will not be subject to reference to the benefit authorities and disqualification from benefit under the provisions of the Social Security Act 1976.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The instructions issued to local offices of my Department, the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Health and Social Security state that there is no disqualification of benefit for not joining or not completing training under the scheme.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if any recruits to the job training scheme are to be over 25 years of age; and what arrangements will be made to pay a training allowance to those recruits who are not entitled to unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *356*]: We will be giving priority for places on the job training scheme to those who are under 25 and unemployed for six months or more, but older long-term unemployed people may apply.

If trainees did not receive benefit immediately before starting training, but claimed credits for national insurance contributions, they will receive a training allowance whenever a change in their circumstances would have entitled them to benefit had they remained unemployed.

Availability for Work Test

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimated number of people who have ceased receiving benefits following the introduction of the availability for work test.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Claimants to unemployment benefits have always been disallowed benefit by independent statutory adjudicating authorities in accordance with long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments, when they are not available for work.

If the hon. Member is asking how many claims have been disallowed for this reason since we introduced modified procedures to enforce the existing rules, the answer, as at 27 February 1987, was 8,866 claimants nationally, which is 1·1 per cent. of those at the new claims stage.

Mr. Soley asked the Paymaster General how many people in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham have had their unemployment benefit suspended because of the new availability for work test; and what percentage of the unemployment register in that borough they represent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments it has always been the practice that wherever a doubt arises as to whether a benefit claimant is available for work, payments are suspended until the independent statutory adjudicating authorities decide entitlement.

If the hon. Member is asking how many claims in the London borough of Hammersmith have been suspended in this way since we introduced improved procedures to apply to existing rules, the answer, as at 27 February 1987, is 388 people. This represents 2·6 per cent. of those who have claimed at these offices since the modifications were introduced.

Mr. Soley asked the Paymaster General what action has been taken by local unemployment benefit officers to encourage the taking up of alternative benefits, should people prove to be ineligible for unemployment benefit as a result of an availability for work test.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our improvements in the arrangements for establishing the availability for work of claimants have made it easier for staff in unemployment benefit offices to identify claimants who may be eligible for an alternative social security benefit. We draw the attention of claimants to the existence of such benefits in the explanatory leaflet they each receive and by the posters in benefit offices. Our benefit office staff have been given guidance about those claimants who may be eligible.

In addition my Department's new claimant advisers work closely with our local staff and play an important role in advising claimants about all social security benefits, including those which do not require the claimant to be available for work. Where necessary our claimant advisers will help claimants in making their applications.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will detail the cost of conducting the availability for work test experiment on the over 50s age group of unemployed; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the tests and plans for extending them nationwide.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *356*]: The cost of conducting the improved availability for work test experiment relating to unemployed claimants aged over 50 who sign-on only once a quarter was approximately £3,000.

The results of the experiment were inconclusive and we have no present plans to extend the procedure.

Self-Employed Persons

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General of the 445,000 estimated increase in self-employed individuals between 1983 and 1986 how many were previously *(a)* employees, *(b)* unemployed, *(c)* on the youth opportunities programme/youth training scheme, *(d)* other special employment measures, and *(e)* economically inactive.

Mr. Trippier: The estimated 445,000 increase in the number of self-employed persons cannot be classified in the way requested, since it represents the net difference between the numbers entering and leaving self-employment between March 1983 and September 1986.

The published employed labour force series does not identify the previous situation of those entering self employment. However, the labour force survey provides information on a different basis. Preliminary LFS results for the spring of 1986 estimate that of 2,723,000 self-employed persons in Great Britain at that time the great

majority had been self-employed one year previously, while 202,000 had been employees, 85,000 unemployed and 92,000 economically inactive. Because of considerations of sample size it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate of the number who had been on Government employment and training schemes a year earlier.

Hotels (London)

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what steps his Department is taking to promote an increase in the supply of low to medium-cost hotel accommodation in London.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is supporting the initiatives being taken by the English Tourist Board, British Tourist Authority and London Tourist Board to follow up the recommendations in the consultancy study which they commissioned last year on "London's Tourist Accommodation in the 1990s". The English Tourist Board is involved in discussions with hotel operators and financial institutions to encourage them to take up opportunities to develop less expensive types of hotel accommodation in London, particularly in non-central areas. In addition, the London tourism forum is actively considering the need for additional hotel capacity in London and the importance of making adequate provision for this in the planning policies of London boroughs.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what is his Department's estimate of the shortfall in hotel accommodation in the low to medium price bracket in London.

Mr. Trippier: A consultant's report commissioned last year by the English Tourist Board, British Tourist Authority and other sponsors has suggested that while there is no evidence of a current shortage of tourist accommodation in London, there could be a potential overall shortfall of 16,000 to 28,000 rooms by the early 1990s. The ETB estimates that a fairly high proportion of these could be in the low and medium price range.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what discussions he has had with *(a)* the British Tourist Authority, *(b)* the English Tourist Board and *(c)* the London Visitors' Convention Bureau on the lack of budget class hotels in the capital.

Mr. Trippier: Officials of my Department are in regular contact with all these boards about the measures they are taking to encourage an increase in the supply of London's hotel accommodation so that it is capable of meeting the full range of future tourist demand, including that for low and medium price hotel rooms.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General what information he has as to how many beds in *(a)* one, *(b)* two, *(c)* three, *(d)* four and *(e)* five star hotels are now available in the central London areas and as to how this compares with five and 10 years ago.

Mr. Trippier: Neither the English Tourist Board nor the London Tourist Board keeps comprehensive information on the numbers or grades of hotel bedrooms in different areas of London. The information requested is therefore not available.

Workfare

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he is now able to state when he expects his study on Workfare to be completed; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Lee: I understand that the research study on Workfare by the employment research centre of the University of Buckingham is almost complete, and that the employment research centre expects to publish the results in the near future.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General whether he will now arrange for public access to lists of businesses in each Manpower Services Commission board with authority receiving support under the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I have no plans to allow public access to lists of businesses supported under the enterprise allowance scheme. Disclosure of this information would require the individual agreement of all participants in the scheme and lists would be administratively expensive to compile and maintain.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many people other than those from ethnic minorities have been recruited on to the Nottingham panel of the Industrial Tribunals Board over the last nine years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: There have been 38 people other than those from ethnic minorities who have been recruited on to the Nottingham panel of industrial tribunals since 1982, the first year for which figures are readily available.

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many people from ethnic minorities now sit on the Nottingham panel of the Industrial Tribunals Board: and how many people sit on that panel who are not members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Lee: There is one panel member on the Nottingham Industrial Tribunals Board who is from the ethnic minorities out of a total membership of 96. One other person from an ethnic minority has recently accepted an invitation to serve.

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General what area is now covered by the Nottingham panel of the Industrial Tribunals Board; and what is the estimated population of that area.

Mr. Lee: The area covered by the Nottingham panel of the Industrial Tribunals Board includes Leicestershire; Nottinghamshire except for Bassetlaw; Derbyshire except for High Peak, Bolsover, Chesterfield and north east Derbyshire; east Staffordshire in Staffordshire; Lincolnshire except for West Lindsey and East Lindsey, Lincoln and North Kesteven; and Corby and Kettering in Northamptonshire. The population is estimated at some 3 million.

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General how many applications he has received from people from ethnic minorities and from people who are not from ethnic minorities for seats on the Nottingham tribunals board.

Mr. Lee: In 1986, when the current appointments to the Nottingham regional office of the industrial tribunals were made, we received nominations from one person from an ethnic minority and 34 from people who were not from ethnic minorities.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General if he will announce the results of the review of the rates of allowance payable under both the job release scheme and the part-time job release scheme.

Mr. Lee: Following our annual review of allowances, the rates payable under the job release schemes from 6 April, will be as follows:

Full-time scheme

For disabled men aged 60, 61, 62 and 63 who are married with a dependent wife whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week, £74·50 a week taxable; for all others £61·15 a week, taxable.

For women aged 59 and men aged 64 who are married with a dependent spouse whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week, £67·55 a week, tax free; for all others £53·90 a week, tax free.

Part-time scheme

The part-time job release scheme closed on 30 May 1986. However, rates of allowance for those who entered the scheme on or before that date will be as follows:

For disabled men aged 60 and 61 and men aged 62 and 63 who are married with a dependent wife whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week, £43 a week taxable; for all others £35·80 a week, taxable.

For women aged 59 and men aged 64 who are married with a dependent spouse whose net income from all sources does not exceed £13 a week, £38·05 a week tax free; for all other £31·15 a week, tax free.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he is considering proposals or investigating the feasibility of depriving unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds of the right to claim supplementary benefit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *241*]: The Government have successfully met their guarantee each year of a place on YTS for all unemployed 16 year olds, and we have now extended that guarantee this year to unemployed 17-year-olds. As a result, from April 1987 onwards there will no longer be a need for anyone under 18 to be unemployed, for everyone will have the choice of a place in school or college or on YTS or a job. We hope that no signficant number of young people will choose to remain unemployed and claim benefit. Any that do so will have to satisfy the long-standing legal rule that they are available for work and actually seeking work before they will receive benefit. We have not taken any decision about the continuing benefit entitlement of under-18s, but we will keep the position under review as we acquire experience of the effect of the new YTS guarantee.

Manpower Services Commission

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the names of the members of each of the area manpower boards of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *354*]: I am sending my hon. Friend a copy of the area manpower board membership list and will place additional copies in the Library.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many staff are employed in all aspects of paying unemployment benefit and dealing with tribunals and fraud; and how many separate premises they occupy.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *356*] Some 29,200 people are currently employed by the unemployment benefit service, of whom approximately 26,400 are directly involved in paying benefits at local offices, 1,000 are engaged in fraud investigation and 600 on the adjudication of benefit claims.

There are 1,100 local unemployment benefit offices, of which some 300 are part-time or offer only limited services.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Stocks

55. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he has recently taken to maintain and improve fish stocks in the rivers of England and Wales.

Mr. Gummer: Responsibility for maintaining, improving and developing salmon, eel and freshwater fisheries in the rivers of England and Wales, as well as for regulating those fisheries, is placed on the water authorities under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. The Government recently took steps to add to the effectiveness of the legislative framework within which the water authorities perform these duties through those sections of the Salmon Act 1986 which apply to England and Wales. They also established the salmon advisory committee earlier this year to examine and advise Ministers on matters relating to the conservation and development of salmon fisheries in England and Wales as well as in Scotland.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting held in Brussels on 30-31 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting, together with my right hon. Friend, the Minister of State.

The Council had a first discussion of the Commission's proposals for agricultural support prices and arrangements for 1987-88. No decisions were reached on these proposals, and the Council will take them up again at its next meeting on 27 April. The marketing years for beef and dairy products, which otherwise would have expired, were therefore extended until 31 May. The Council also decided to continue for a similar period the suspension of part of the French and United Kingdom monetary compensatory amounts on eggs and poultrymeat, thus maintaining the benefit of these arrangements to our producers.

Against a background of the very high cost of the common agricultural policy, which is threatening to

exceed budgetary ceilings, I supported the main elements of the proposals, namely a tough policy on the prices themselves, the strengthening and extension of guarantee threshold mechanisms, and a weakening of the support provided through intervention buying. In several areas I felt the proposals did not go far enough in these directions.

I made clear my opposition to certain parts of the proposals: first and foremost to the tax on vegetable and marine oils and flats, which would place a burden on consumers, besides risking a major dispute with overseas suppliers; and also to the proposals to limit the payment of the ewe premium to a given number of ewes per farm, and to end intervention for salted butter.

Dairy Inspection

Mr. Best asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *417*, to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn, if he will set out what other work is included in the definition of statutory work beyond dairy inspection, the constituent elements of subsistent costs including allowances for meals and accommodation; which senior Agricultural Development Advisory Service staff are involved with dairy inspection and what is the extent of their work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The figure of 45·7 man years for statutory work includes not only time which dairy husbandry staff spend on farms but also their travelling time and the time they spend writing up reports, writing to producers and preparing for further visits: it also includes time which grades I and II devote to managing statutory work in order to ensure that the regulations are interpreted consistently across the country. The figure of 1·5 man years reflects the fact that, in addition, some 30 senior ADAS staff located at headquarters, in the regions and in Wales, devote a small proportion of their time to managing statutory work. There are standard, service wide, rates for travel and subsistence.

Greater London

Mr. Squire asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements exist within his Department, within the central headquarters or in any regional or sub-regional organisation, for dealing with his responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area; and how many full-time equivalent staff are involved in such work.

Mr. Jopling: Many aspects of my responsibilities affect the Greater London area as other parts of the country. These are dealt with by the appropriate units such as animal and plant health, horticulture, flood defence and land sales divisions and the south-east and eastern regions. No central record is kept of the manpower used for the Greater London area alone.

Mr. Squire asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with which Departments and non-departmental bodies his Department, and its related non-departmental public bodies has consulted during 1986-87 in respect of services provided within Greater London; approximately how often such consultations have taken place; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Jopling: Consultation takes place as and when necessary. No central record is kept of oral or written consultations.

Mr. Squire asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether there are any proposals to change the arrangements for discharging his Department's responsibilities regarding public services or any other function in respect of the Greater London area during the forthcoming year.

Mr. Jopling: There are no such proposals.

International Bee Research Association

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to reintroduce the grant of £20,000 to the International Bee Research Association formerly given by the Development Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. My Department's research funds are spent on commissioning specific work, including over £100,000 on topics of interest to beekeepers, rather than on grants to particular organisations.

Dairy Industry

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to prevent dairies or dairy farmers from adding a substance to milk to nullify the effect of antibiotics to enable it to be processed into cheese.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Inner City Initiatives

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has spent on the urban programme and other inner city initiatives since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: Expenditure on my Department's urban group of programmes has more than doubled in real terms from £114 million in 1978-79 to £531 million in 1987-88. Since 1979 more than £3,500 million has in total been allocated to these programmes, generating more than £2,000 million in investment from other resources, including expenditure on the urban programme, urban development grant, urban development corporations and derelict land grant.

Planning Appeals

12. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of planning applications has gone to appeal in each year since 1979; and what percentage of these appeals has been successful in each year.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information for England is as follows:

Year	Number of planning applications received	Appeals received as percentage of applications received in the year Per cent.	Proportion of appeals decided which were allowed Per cent.
1979[1]	—	—	29·1
1980	527,700	3·1	30·8
1981	450,400	3·7	32·7
1982	399,200	3·5	31·0
1983	428,200	3·2	32·4
1984	427,600	3·8	32·4
1985	430,800	4·0	37·4
1986[1]	—	—	40·5

[1] Full figures for applications received are not available for the calendar years 1979 and 1986.

Only about 2 per cent. of all planning permissions are given on appeal. Between 1983 and 1986 the proportion of planning applications refused by local planning authorities went up from 12·8 per cent. to 14·9 per cent.

Clearance Areas (Compulsory Purchase)

13. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be introducing measures to amend the regulations on the compulsory purchase of houses in clearance areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Proposals to make market value compensation available to all owners of unfit houses, purchased compulsorily, were announced in the Green Paper "Home Improvement — A New Approach". Primary legislation will be necessary and must await a suitable opportunity in the parliamentary timetable.

Planning Circular

16. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received, to date, about his new planning circular.

Mr. Waldegrave: The consultation period on the draft circular continues until 10 April. I have already received a number of representations from local authority, environmental, farming and business interests and from private individuals.

Greater London House Conditions Survey

18. **Mr. Raynsford** the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive a copy of the 1985 Greater London house conditions survey.

Mr. John Patten: I have already received a copy.

Derelict Land and Buildings

19. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce a notification system for derelict land and buildings in private ownership that are capable of redevelopment within a subsequent period of five years.

Mr. John Patten: The periodic survey of derelict land carried out by my Department includes information on the extent of such land in private ownership. I have no plans to extend the scope of the survey, nor to require private owners to notify me of the redevelopment potential of their land.

Development Corporations (Jobs and Houses)

20. **Mr. Lester** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of new jobs created, and homes refurbished and built by *(a)* the London Docklands Development Corporation and *(b)* the Merseyside Development Corporation.

Mr. John Patten: Between 1981 and mid-1985 some 8,000 permanent jobs were attracted to LDDC's area. MDC has so far attracted a total of 1,156 jobs. In addition, there are currently about 1,500 construction jobs at any one time in London and 700 in Merseyside. Both UDCs also actively support existing firms and jobs.

Some 6,041 homes were built in London's docklands up to the end of 1986, with about 5,000 currently under construction; 221 flats have been refurbished in buildings previously owned by the LDDC. In MDC's area, 60 new homes have been built, with a further 60 currently under construction and many more are now planned.

Land Use

21. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of land currently designated for agricultural use he estimates will change to other uses besides forestry as a result of the proposals contained in the draft circular on alternative land use.

Mr. Waldegrave: In England and Wales in the period 1980-85 fewer than 5,000 hectares of farmland a year were transferred to urban uses, compared with 15,000-17,000 hectares a year in the period 1945-1975. I do not expect any significant change in the recent rate as a result of the adjustment of planning policy proposed in the draft circular.

Islington (Rate Support Grant)

22. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of rate support grant payable to Islington borough; and what was the equivalent figure for 1979-80.

Mr. Chope: £51·049 million in 1986-87; £57·323 million at the settlement spending assumption in 1987-88. There is no equivalent figure for 1979-80.

London Marathon (County Hall)

23. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has had with the London residuary body about the future use of county hall by the organisers of the London marathon.

Mr. Chope: I have nothing to add to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Gentleman on 4 March.

Community Charge

24. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what further representations he has received on his consultative documents on the community charge.

Mr. Chope: We have received about 20 representations in response to the document on the community charge.

37. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of local authority income he estimates will be under central Government control under the proposed community charge scheme.

Mr. Chope: The assumption in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) was that the relative shares of income from different sources would be unchanged in the move to the new local finance system. The Green Paper related to 1984-85 when total local authority income from all sources was some £39 billion. Of that total, all forms of Government grants and subsidies accounted for 35·6 per cent. Non-domestic rate income, which under the Green Paper proposals will be determined by statutory formula, accounted for a further 16·5 per cent. The actual balance between sources of income will depend on decisions to be taken by the Government at the time of implementation.

28. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the proposed minimum proportion of rates or community charge to be paid by persons on low incomes.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 24 March to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs).

41. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish an analysis of representations received on his proposals for a community charge, showing those organisations in favour and those against.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe).

45. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish updated tables showing the import of the community charge for each local authority and a range of households.

Mr. Chope: I have today placed in the Library figures illustrating the possible effect of our community charge and non-domestic rate proposals on all local authorities. These are based on what authorities planned to spend in 1986-87, and make no allowances for authorities which might bring their spending under control, nor for changes in the total of central Government grant or GREs such as will occur in 1987-88. They also depend on assumptions about the way in which the new system will operate where a number of important decisions still remain to be taken.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish tables in the *Official Report* showing in respect of each district and borough in England and Wales at what rateable value the estimated community charge will be equal to the domestic rate bill, for one, two and three-adult households, with and without safety nets;

(2) if he will estimate the size of the total safety net provision for England and Wales in the first year of operation of the community charge; how many local authorities will contribute to this provision; how many will receive from it; and which are the top 10 contributors and recipients;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables relating to the impact of the community charge showing for each district and borough in England and Wales *(a)* the average domestic rate bills for 1986-87, and *(b)* his estimate of the community charge at a taxpayer level on a comparable 1986-87 basis, for one-adult, two-adult and three-adult households, with safety nets and without safety nets, showing in each case the difference between rate bills and community charges.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *420*]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). I have today written to the hon. Member.

"Paying for Local Government"

25. **Mr. McLoughlin** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any further responses to the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Chope: Since the consultation period ended on 31 October, we have received a number of responses to the Green Paper and to our subsequent announcements.

Basildon (New Towns Commission Tenants)

26. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the status of New Towns Commission tenants in Basildon.

Mr. John Patten: Tenants of the New Towns Commission in Basildon are secure tenants under the Housing Act 1985, with all the rights and protection which that brings.

Council House Sales

27. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the numbers of council houses *(a)* sold and *(b)* built in north east Cambridgeshire in each of the last five years.

Mr. Tracey: This information is not collected for individual constituencies.

Harrow (Rate Support Grant)

29. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the council of the London borough of Harrow about the rate support grant figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had no discussions with the council of the London Borough of Harrow about the rate support grant figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88, although there has been correspondence between the council and the Department.

Urban Regeneration Grant

30. **Mr. Dorrell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to introduce the new urban regeneration grant.

Mr. John Patten: Next week.

Housing Associations

31. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what money has been made available in the current financial year to housing associations.

Mr. Tracey: Forecast gross investment is £798 million, as set out in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd 56, Vol. II. table 3.9.7).

Water Industry

32. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department has spent during 1986-87 to the latest available date in relation to proposals to privatise the water industry.

Mr. John Patten: The latest forecast of expenditure in 1986-87 on work in preparation for the privatisation of the water authorities is as follows:

	£
Staff	400,000
Advisers Fees	1,100,000
Office Services	25,000
Total	1,535,000

These figures do not include certain other costs, such as accommodation, which are borne centrally.

Urban Development Grants

33. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied with the response to his invitation for bids for urban development grants.

Mr. John Patten: Yes, 57 local authorities in England are now invited to submit applications for urban development grant, including eight which were first invited in February this year.

Chemicals (Ozone Depletion)

34. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, in order of importance, the five chemical compounds which on current usage patterns within the United Kingdom has the greatest ozone-depleting potential.

Mr. Waldegrave: Depletion of the ozone layer is a global problem. It is generally accepted internationally that the five chemical compounds having the greatest ozone-depleting potential are CFC 12, CFC 11, CFC 113 and Halons 1211 and 1301, having regard to the relative efficiency of subtstances to destroy ozone and estimates of global production. Figures for the use of these chemicals in the United Kingdom are not available.

Bedfordshire County Council (Grant)

35. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much grant Bedfordshire county council has lost for the year 1987-88 as a result of *(a)* increasing its expenditure for that year above the level his Department had assumed of 5·25 per cent. on current expenditure and *(b)* increasing its expenditure for that year above the rate of inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Bedfordshire county council's grant entitlement for 1987-88 amounts to £37·2 million at the level of expenditure we estimate it has budgeted for. This is £8·2 million less than it would have received if it spent at the settlement spending assumption—that is a 5·25 per cent. increase on current expenditure—and £9·9 million less than if it had increased expenditure in line with inflation. These entitlements and Bedforshire's budget include the estimated effects of the teachers' pay deal.

It is Bedfordshire county council's decision to increase expenditure by 12·0 per cent. including additional expenditure arising from the teachers' pay deal, which has resulted in the reduced grant entitlement. The resulting 21·3 per cent. increase in its precept is the highest of any shire county. If Bedfordshire had budgeted in line with the settlement spending assumption adjusted for teachers' pay, its precept increase would have been lower than the average shire county increase of 7·9 per cent.

Housing Estates (Conservation Villages)

36. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to resist the contruction of large new housing estates in designated conservation villages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Policy on development control in conservation areas is set out in DOE Circular 8/87 published on 25 March. This repeats advice from an earlier circular (23/77) that in considering proposals for new development the emphasis will often be on control rather than prevention, to allow the area to remain alive and prosperous, but at the same time ensure that any new development accords with its architectural and visual qualities. Policy on the provision of sites for new housing in and around villages more generally is set out in DOE Circular 15/84.

Local Authority Housing Stock

38. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the figure given in his Department's most recent report on the conditions of local authority housing stock for the sum required to bring conditions up to modern standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Further information on the condition of the local authority housing stock will be provided by the 1986 English house condition survey.

Amusement Centres

39. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about the change of use of premises for amusement centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend has received representations from hon. Members of this House and the general public expressing the view that the moral and social issues which so often lead to public opposition to amusement arcades should be considerations to be taken into account in planning decisions. However, the courts have decided that only considerations relating to land use and environmental issues are material. Such material considerations would include location, noise, disturbance and appearance. The impact of a proposed amusement centre on the character of a shopping area might also be material, but this would be judged on the basis of whether the implementation of the proposals would mean the overall number of non-retail outlets reaching an unacceptable level.

Black Country (Urban Development Corporation)

40. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last visited the west midlands to discuss the proposed urban development corporation for the Black Country.

Mr. John Patten: I visited the west midands on 11 March and held discussions with leading members of Sandwell and Walsall metropolitan borough councils.

Both authorities are to be congratulated on their realism and foresight in accepting the benefits which the designation of an urban development corporation will bring to the Black Country. The constructive attitude of the local authorities means that additional resources will reach the area earlier. The chairman and deputy chairman designate of the proposed UDC are already working with vigour and enthusiasm to ensure that no time is lost in tackling the problems of the area.

Urban Development Corporations

42. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to accelerate progress in setting up urban development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are making rapid progress in setting up the four new UDCs announced last October. The Trafford Park development corporation came into existence on 10 February. Consultants have been studying the proposed areas for the Black Country, Tyne and Wear and Teesside UDCs. Chairmen designate have been announced and orders establishing these UDCs will be made shortly.

Bathing Water

43. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has received from the European Community regarding legal action in relation to the European Community directive on bathing waters.

Mr. Waldegrave: As I informed the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 26 June 1986, there have been requests for information in respect of a number of individual bathing waters which have been the subject of representations to the commission.

We have responded to these requests and provided the commission with the information sought.

46. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to give any advice to the British public regarding the use of bathing waters below the European Community standard.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government see no need to issue general guidance on this matter. Her Majesty's Government are advised that sewage contamination of bathing waters may create a health hazard only when conditions are so foul as to be aesthetically quite unacceptable. Such occurrences are extremely rare. It is for medical officers of environmental health or officers from local authority environmental health departments to advise on local conditions.

Leicester (Unoccupied Housing)

44. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the percentage of houses in the private sector in Leicester which are presently unoccupied.

Mr. Tracey: The latest figures the Department has are contained in Leicester's 1986 HIP submission, a copy of which is in the Library.

Rate Support Grant

47. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish his next report on the rate support grant proposal.

Mr. Chope: The rate support grant report for 1987-88 and supplementary reports for two other years were laid before the House on Friday 20 March 1987. They were approved by the House on Wednesday 25 March 1987.

My right hon. Friend proposes to lay a supplementary report for 1987-88 shortly. This will deal primarily with revisions arising from the proposed teachers' pay settlement.

Local Planning Inquiries (Assistance to Objectors)

48. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to provide assistance to objectors in preparing their case for major local planning inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. The Government's response (CM 43) to the Fifth Report from the Environment Committee set out in paragraphs 63 to 65 our reasons for concluding against any form of funding for objectors.

Nitrite Levels (EC Directive)

49. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has received from the European Community regarding legal action in relation to the European Community directive on nitrite levels.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Commission of the European Communities wrote on 13 February 1987 to inform me that it had decided to take action against the United Kingdom under article 169 of the treaty for non-compliance with the EC directive relating to the quality of water intended for human consumption, in respect of nitrite levels in the water supply serving Tower Hamlets. No reasons were given and no letter instituting such action has been received to date.

A request for a delay in complying with the directive standard for nitrite in Tower Hamlets was sent to the Commission in 1985, as permitted under article 20 of the directive. The delay was requested until September this year, by which time the supply is expected to comply with the directive. The Commission is now being informed of the substantial progress already made towards achieving this compliance.

Structure Plans

50. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is in a position to announce his proposals for the future of structure plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's proposals for the future of development plans were set out in a consultation paper issued last September. Comments on them are still being considered.

Greater London Council

51. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give an estimate of the

overall saving so far and the average saving per household which has resulted from the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend announced on 19 March, at columns *558-60*, that the Government estimate that long-term annual savings of some £100 million per annum will result from staff savings following abolition. We expect that about half these savings will be as a direct result of abolition of the GLC.

In addition, the London residuary body estimates that some £129 million of GLC closing revenue balances and some £141·4 million capital receipts arising from its own disposals of capital assets and repayments of principal on loans is available for distribution by 31 March 1988. This cash is being distributed to all rating authorities in the area and amounts to about £100 per household.

Beaches (Pollution)

52. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress being made on the removal of pollution from the beaches of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on 27 March at column *276*.

Unfit Dwellings

53. **Mr. Stott** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the number of dwellings classed as unfit; and if he will give a breakdown for both public and private sectors.

Mr. Tracey: The Department's latest estimates appear in table 13 of the "English House Condition Survey 1981: Part 1", a copy of which is in the Library. Results of the 1986 survey are not yet available. The totals of numbers of unfit dwellings reported in local authorities' annual HIP returns have not been consistent with estimates from the house condition surveys.

Water Charges

54. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received regarding the increase in water charges to domestic users.

Mr. John Patten: Between October 1986 and mid-March 1987 my Department has received some 30 representations specifically concerning increases in water charges to domestic consumers.

London Docklands Redevelopment Corporation (Houses and Flats)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of houses and flats built on London Docklands Development Corporation owned land between July and December 1986, were sold to those on the housing waiting lists of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham councils.

Mr. John Patten: Between the establishment of the corporation in July 1981 and 31 December 1986 45 per cent. of the sales of houses constructed on LDDC-owned sites were to residents of Southwark, Newham and Tower Hamlets. LDDC does not record what proportion of these purchasers were on the borough's housing waiting lists.

Defective Housing

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the *Official Report* a list of the main prefabricated reinforced concrete house types covered by housing defects legislation, listing, in each case, the proportion of the estimated numbers of that type that has so far been repurchased by local authorities.

Mr. Tracey: The following PRC house types are designated under the housing defects legislation:

Airey
Boot
Cornish Unit
Dorran
Dyke
Gregory
Myton
Newland
Orlit
Parkinson Frame
Reema Hollow Panel
Schindler and Hawksley SGS
Stent
Stonecrete
Tarran
Underdown
Unity and Butterley
Waller
Wates
Wessex
Winget
Woolaway

We estimate that some 23,000 private owners of PRC properties are eligible for assistance and that by end December 1986, local authorities in England had repurchased some 4,300 designated properties (including the Smith house type). Comprehensive information on repurchases by property type is not currently available.

Grant-related Expenditure Assessments

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he now proposes to make any changes in the factors used to compile local authority grant-related expenditure assessement.

Mr. Chope: Grant-related expenditure assessments (GREAs) for 1987-88 were approved by the House on 25 March. We have begun consultation with the local authority associations and preliminary work on the 1988-89 GREAs.

Countryside (Access)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land in England falls within the definition of open country set out in section 59 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as amended by section 16 of the Countryside Act 1968; and, of that land *(a)* to how much the public has a legal right of access on foot, *(b)* to how much the public has in practice, but not as of right, access on foot and *(c)* to how much the public is denied access on foot.

Mr. Waldegrave: No central record is maintained of this information.

Flagstaffs

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual cost to public funds of erecting and lowering flagstaffs in Parliament square

and elsewhere in the metropolis for state visits, anniversaries and other celebrations; and if he will make a statement about the tendering for this work.

Mr. Chope: The annual cost varies according to the number of state visits and other events. The cost for 1986-87 is expected to be £90,000. In 1985-86 it was approximately £150,000.

The work is carried out by contractors appointed for three years on the basis of competitive tendering.

Planning Control

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate discussions with representatives of local authorities' planning departments on changes in planning legislation to provide for applications for planning permission for the demolition of unlisted dwellings as well as for the erection of new dwellings.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has no evidence to suggest that there is a significant problem which would be remedied by such an extension of planning control.

Council Houses

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses were started in 1986; and what was the comparable figure in 1976.

Mr. Tracey: The number of dwellings started for local authorities in 1976 appears in table 6.1*(a)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics, 1975-1985" and the provisional figure for 1986 appears in table 2*(a)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 28. Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of its work in terms of turnover the Property Services Agency contracts out.

Mr. Chope: Nearly 80.

Seal Skins

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give figures for the number of seal an sealion skins being imported into the United Kingdom and the EEC for 1986.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

The information is in the following table.

Imports of complete raw furskins 1986

	Numbers	
	European Community[1]	*United Kingdom*
Pups of Harp and Hooded seals	1,603	—
Other seals and sealions	124,969	2,586

[1] Excluding Greece and Portugal.
Source: Eurostat.

Housing Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the cost or receipts to public funds at the local and national level in the current financial year of *(a)* subsidies to local authority and new town housing net of rents receivable before any remission to tenants on account of housing benefit and other remissions, *(b)* receipts from the sale of local authority and new town housing, *(c)* mortgage interest tax relief on private housing and *(d)* housing and other benefits to tenants of local authority and private landlords, respectively.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 March 1987, c. *47*]: Estimates (England only) for 1986-87 are:

	£ million
(a) Subsidies to local authority and new town housing	567
(b) Local authority and new town housing capital receipts	[1]2,000
(c) Mortgate interest tax relief	3,960
(d) Cost of housing benefit to tenants of local authority and private landlords, including rate rebates to owner occupiers	4,240

[1] Approximate.

Requests for more detailed information on housing benefit and other forms of income support to tenants of local authority and private landlords should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

THE ARTS

Consumer Protection

Mr. Cash asked the Minister for the Arts what advice he has given to public library authorities on the possible effect on the discharge of their functions of clauses 10 and (46)(1)*(a)* of the Consumer Protection Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Luce: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 2 April 1987

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General how many unemployed claimants aged under 25 years there were in each parliamentary constituency at the most recently available date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am sending the hon. Member the information requested which is also available from the Library. The information relates to the numbers of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in each parliamentary constituency of the United Kingdom on 8 January 1987, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available.

Mr. Wallace asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the steps he takes to ensure the accuracy of his Department's unemployment figures as a true indication of the number out of work.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am satisfied that the monthly unemployment figures are an accurate measure of the number of people claiming benefits at unemployment benefit offices.

Industrial Language Training Service

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General when he expects his Department's considerations of the Manpower Services Commission's review of the industrial language training service to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: A decision has now been made that the industrial language training service will continue to be funded by the Manpower Services Commission for a further financial year under present arrangements. Further consideration will be given during the year to the range of problems the ILTS is seeking to tackle to offer further guidance on its future funding and management.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what are the reasons for the delay in responding to the recommendations on the future of the industrial language training service; what representations he has received from the Manpower Services Commission about its ability to determine the 1987-88 Budget provision in the absence of decisions on these recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Decisions on the future of the industrial language training service have required very careful attention in the light of the important issues raised in the recent review. Officials in the MSC and my Department have worked closely in planning how best to allocate funds for 1987-88 while further consideration is given to the future management and funding of the service. The local authorities concerned have been told of the financial arrangements for next year.

YTS

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Paymaster General what percentage of people trained under YTS in 1986 completed their course with a nationally recognised qualification.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the form requested. Of those respondents to the Manpower Services Commission's regular follow-up survey of leavers who completed a one-year YTS training programme in the period April to August 1986, 32 per cent. reported that they had gained a nationally recognised qualification whilst on YTS. Under two-year YTS, which began in April 1986, it is intended that all trainees should be given the chance to gain such a qualification.

City Task Forces

Mr. Freeson asked the Paymaster General if he will give details of the work of the interdepartmental task forces established in 1986 in eight small city areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The task forces were set up under the Government's inner cities initiative. The aim of the initiative is to improve the quality of life and bring jobs to the most deprived areas by improving the targeting of the Government's national programmes on to those areas and to experiment with new methods of extending those programmes using an £8 million a year top-up fund. The task forces comprise of a small number of civil servants and private sector secondees in offices in the districts they serve. They seek to establish good relations with the residents of the district and to involve those residents in plans for the revival of their areas.

So far I have approved 100 projects committing more than £4·9 million of these top-up resources in our task force areas. These will encourage enterprise training and job creation. We have also concentrated the efforts and programmes of the Manpower Services Commission and other Government Departments on the eight areas and their residents. We are establishing enterprise agencies and development funds to support local business in partnership with a clearing bank in each district. We are making progress on the greater use of local labour on inner city building work and on targeted training schemes which link training with specific job opportunities for local people. We are entering into projects in partnership with private sector companies such as Tarmac and McAlpine and we are involving existing organisations with experience in the field or strong local connections such as Business in the Community, Project Fullemploy, Action Resource Centre, Evangelical Alliance, NACRO, the Industrial Society, the Apex Trust and others in pursuing the aims of the initiative.

Mr. Freeson asked the Paymaster General if he will give details of the work of the city action teams in *(a)* Hackney, *(b)* Islington and Lambeth, *(c)* Newcastle-Gateshead, *(d)* Liverpool, *(e)* Manchester-Salford and *(f)* Birmingham since their establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Five city action teams were set up in April 1985. They are located in: London (which includes Hackney, Islington and Lambeth); Newcastle-Gateshead; Liverpool; Manchester-Salford and Birmingham.

The city action teams have been successful in meeting their objectives of better co-ordinating Government action and help in the priority areas they cover. They aim to reduce the number of people in acute housing stress,

reduce the number of derelict sites and void buildings and increase job opportunities and the employability of certain groups. Total Government provision for expenditure in the city action teams priority areas was estimated to amount to about £670 million in 1985-86, and about £739 million in 1986-87. The Government have provided an additional £1 million to the Newcastle-Gateshead city action team during 1986-87 to provide pump-priming finance as part of their response to the recent shibuilding closures in the north-east.

Departmental Section UB 9

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the responsibilities of his Department section UB 9.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *241*]: I take it that the hon. Member is referring to UBS 9, which is one of the sections within my Department's unemployment benefit service head office.

The section is responsible for liaison arrangements between the Manpower Services Commission and unemployment benefit service and the related benefit office procedures.

Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the preliminary results of his study into the reallocation of responsibility for benefits for the unemployed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *241*]: No. The preliminary report of the joint study team on the relationships between DHSS and the Department of Employment and their networks of local offices was produced as advice for Ministers.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he is investigating the feasibility of imposing any new work test or conditions for the payment of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c. *241*]: the policy and practice in these and many other matters is kept under review.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many staff are employed in *(a)* unemployment benefit offices, *(b)* jobcentres, *(c)* Manpower Services Commission and *(d)* the remainder of his Department; and how many separate buildings are occupied for each.

Mr. Lee [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *356*]: The information requested as on 9 March 1987 (the latest date for which figures are available) is as follows:

	Number of staff (including casual appointments)	*Number of buildings*
Unemployment benefit service (including unemployment benefit offices and regional offices)	29,200	[2]1,100
Employment and enterprise group[5] (including jobcentres, regional and area offices)	15,471	[3]1,009
The Manpower Services Commission (including the employment and enterprise group, vocational and educational training group, skill training agency and MSC head office)	[1]27,305	1,285
Remainder of Department of Employment (group)	8,781	[4]175

[1] This figure includes the number of staff given at [5].
[2] Unemployment benefit offices.
[3] Jobcentres.
[4] Including outstations.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Corporation Tax

Mr. McCrindle asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects of his proposals relating to corporation tax on the capital gains of companies on life assurance companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date for 1987-88 the information in the reply dated 25 July 1986, *Official Report*, column *698*, concerning reduced rate contributions together with the estimated cost to the Exchequer; and if he will publish his subsequent letter in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to the reply*, 25 March 1987, c. *214-15*]: I have been asked to reply.

It is expected that during 1987-88 an average of 1·6 million women in the United Kingdom will be eligible to pay class 1 national insurance contributions at the reduced rate for married women and widows. This estimate includes those optants who are expected to earn less than the class 1 lower earnings limit, and who are not expected to pay any contributions.

It is estimated that in 1987-88 the full year cost of the reduced contribution rate, in terms of lower contributions revenue, will be £200 million. It is not possible to estimate reliably the associated saving in benefit expenditure.

The remaining information is as follows:

Class 1 primary contribution rates 1987-88

	Not contracted-out		*Contracted-out*		
			Standard rate		
	Standard Rate	*Reduced Rate*[1]	*On first £39.00*	*On earnings over £39.00*	*Reduced Rate*[1]
	per cent.	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
Contributions payable on:					
All earnings if they reach £39.00 but do not exceed £64.99	5·00	3·85	5·00	2·85	3·85
All earnings if they reach £65.00 but do not exceed £99.99	7·00	3·85	7·00	4·85	3·85
All earnings if they reach £100·00 but do not exceed £295·00	9·00	3·85	9·00	6·85	3·85
Earnings exceeding £295·00	9·00 of £295·00	3·85 of £295·00	9·00	6·85 up to £295·00	3·85 of £295·00

[1] The primary reduced rate remains the same for all the earnings brackets; it is the secondary rates which vary depending on the bracket.

A copy of my hon. Friend's letter to the hon. Member has been placed in the Library.

THE ARTS

Consumer Protection

Mr. Cash asked the Minister for the Arts what advice he has given to public library authorities on the possible effect on the discharge of their functions of clauses 10 and 46(1)*(a)* of the Consumer Protection Bill.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1987]: None. Clause 10 of the Bill creates the offence of supplying consumer goods, including books, which fail to comply with the general safety requirement. It does not relate to risks of death or personal injury which might arise by virtue of a person's relying on or being influenced by what is printed in a book. The definition of "safe" in clause 19 makes that clear. A public library authority will be liable only if it supplies (a term defined in clause 46) consumer goods which are not reasonably safe having regard to all circumstances.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

BBC External Services

55. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the external services of the British Broadcasting Corporation; and what was discussed.

56. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his last meeting with representatives of the external services of the BBC.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last met representatives of the BBC external services when he visited Bush House on 20 March. During his visit my right hon. and learned Friend discussed a range of external broadcasting issues with the top management of the external services. He also took the opportunity to underline the importance of the fundamental principle of accountability for public funds as well as our view that it is right that the National Audit Office should have access to the BBC external services to carry out economy, efficiency and effectiveness examinations.

Passports

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards foreign Governments who are proven to have forged British passports for use by their agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We take the greatest exception to such actions by foreign Governments and make this clear, as well as seeking firm assurances against any recurrence of such unacceptable behaviour.

South Africa (Military Attachés)

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to cease to accredit South African military attachés to the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs told the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 5 June 1986, at column 626, we have already agreed with our European partners not to grant accreditation to military attachés from South Africa.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Nicaragua

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of British Government aid to Nicaragua in 1986.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1986 British bilateral aid to Nicaragua consisted of:

a. Support for small development projects co-financed with British voluntary agencies under the joint funding scheme. Eleven projects were approved in the financial year 1985-86 to a value of some £100,000.

b. £82,500 in response to an appeal by Christian Aid to help displaced persons in Nicaragua.

c. £3,200 in technical co-operation for training in Britain.

Nicaragua also benefited from European Community aid to the region, to which Britain makes a substantial contribution.

Lebanon

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken by the European Community to assist the Palestinians with food and medical supplies in the refugee camps in the Lebanon.

Mr. Chris Patten: The European Community contributes annually (about £22 million in 1986) to the feeding programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which mainly benefit Palestinians in Lebanon. In addition, 2·7 million ecu (about £2 million) from the EC budget was allocated on 5 March 1987 to UNRWA, the UN Disaster Relief Organisation and the International Committee of the Red Cross towards their efforts to relieve conditions in the camps. Member states of the Community are also making their own contributions.

SCOTLAND

Housing (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the current and capital expenditure per head on housing in Scotland during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: Current expenditure on the housing revenue accounts of local authorities, new towns and the SSHA was £169·40 per head of overall population in 1985-86. Information on the current expenditure of housing associations is not available. Gross capital expenditure by all public housing bodies in 1985-86 was £115·62 per head.

Primary Schools

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many primary schools with fewer than three teachers there are in each of Scotland's regions and island areas; and if he will give a breakdown of the figures to show the number in each district.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of education authority primary schools in each region and island area in which less than three full-time equivalent teachers were employed in 1984 were as follows. Education statistics are not collated at district level.

	Numbers
Borders	36
Central	22
Dumfries and Galloway	47
Fife	23
Grampian	82
Highland	113
Lothian	18
Strathclyde	96
Tayside	61
Orkney	10
Shetland	19
Western Isles	36

Council House Sales

Sir Alexander Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to seek to improve the average time taken to process council house sales by *(a)* the Edinburgh district council and *(b)* other local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Across Scotland as a whole there is evidence that authorities are becoming increasingly aware of the financial advantages to be gained by the efficient processing of council house sales. The average time taken by councils during the fourth quarter of 1986 was 7·5 months — close to the target figure of seven months which we consider reasonable.

I am concerned, however, at the length of time which some local authorities are taking to process sales. Because receipts from council house sales form part of an authority's annual gross capital allocation for housing, processing delays—which result in the authority failing to generate the receipts level anticipated during the year in question — cause real reductions in the authority's effective consent, and hence in its housing programme.

I have therefore instructed my Department to write today to four authorities — Edinburgh, Monklands, Dumbarton and Argyll and Bute district councils—each of which is taking longer than 11 months on average to process sales, drawing their attention to the serious consequences of these delays. I calculate, for example, that because of delays in processing sales Edinburgh district council has forgone almost £10 million of capital expenditure consents since 1983, equivalent to approximately 10 per cent. of its gross housing capital allocation over the period. The letter asks for an early indication of the steps the four authorities propose to take to ensure that sales are completed within a reasonable period.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

British Telecom

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Attorney-General how many cases of multiple applications for British Telecom shares have been or are being investigated; if he will list cases in which successful prosecutions have been mounted; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Twelve cases of multiple applications for British Telecom shares were investigated by the police and considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions. Criminal proceedings for attempting to obtain British Telecom shares by deception, were instituted in seven cases against a total of 10 defendants. These cases were tried at Bow street magistrates court between 11 March and 29 September 1986. All 10 defendants (Roy Corbin, Warwick Goodman, Edward Hems, Paul Fogg, Dennis Williamson, Brian West, Brian Taub, Roy Conway, Stephen Conway and Michael Collins) were convicted.

DEFENCE

Rainfall (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish detailed local figures of the amount of

rainfall in Gwynedd on Friday 2 May 1986; and if he will make a statement on the degree of statistical accuracy of such meteorological information.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Rainfall measurements at some 40 observation points in Gwynedd between 0900 2 May and 0900 3 May 1986 ranged from 0 to 6·3 mm, the smaller amounts being mainly in the coastal areas and the larger ones in Anglesea and Snowdonia. Because of the showery nature of the rainfall, it is possible that even heavier falls occurred in localities not adequately covered by rain gauges.

Bullying and Brutality

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the procedures which establish to whom young recruits should initially refer complaints of bullying or brutality in the Army.

Mr. Freeman: A soldier may make a complaint about bullying, or any matter in which he thinks he has been wronged, either to his immediate superiors, such as his platoon or company commander, or direct to his commanding officer, who is required by law to investigate the complaint and take action as he considers necessary. Periodically soldiers are also given the opportunity to bring a complaint to the attention of a senior visiting officer. All soldiers are made aware of these procedures at an early stage in their training.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information is provided for recruits about procedures for making complaints about mistreatment.

Mr. Freeman: Mistreatment is not tolerated in the armed forces. Information on the services' redress of grievance procedures is brought to the attention of all personnel, including recruits, through posters and notices displayed prominently in all units and through standing publications.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available in the Library the results of each investigation in the last four years into allegations of cruelty and brutality in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: It is not normal practice to publish investigation reports and, while their results are made available on request to those with a direct interest, it would not be appropriate to place such results in the Library.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of assessing the number of complaints made in each case of the last four years about cruelty and brutality in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: As I stated in answer to the right hon. Member's question on 23 March, at column 2, the information is not held centrally. It would be necessary to make inquiries at every service unit to see whether any such complaints had been made over the past four years. The cost of such an investigation would clearly be substantial.

Recruits (Training Costs)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average cost of (a) the first six months and *(b)* the first 12 months of training of recruits.

Mr. Freeman: Records are not held in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Deserters

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have deserted in each of the last four years; and in which branch of the armed forces they served.

Mr. Freeman: Statistics for desertion and absence without leave are not easily distinguished, as the difference cannot normally be established until return. The following table therefore gives figures for both desertion and absence without leave from the armed forces (in practice the majority of cases fall into the latter category and arise from short-term domestic or personal problems affecting the individual).

Numbers deserting or going absent without leave: 1983 to 1986

	Royal Navy and Royal Marines	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*
1983	149	670	19
1984	110	662	16
1985	117	548	9
1986	100	522	12

Note: The figures show those deserting or being declared absent without leave in each year. The latter occurs after a maximum of seven days absence for the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines and after 21 days absence for the Army and Royal Air Force.

Foxhunter Radar

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the discussions being held between his Department and the General Electric Company on the renegotiation of the supply contract for the Foxhunter radar system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) on 1 April.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects Foxhunter radar to be fully operational in Tornado F2/3 squadrons of the Royal Air Force; what delays have occurred in this contract; and what financial penalties will be incurred by the manufacturer.

Mr. Archie Hamilton [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 March 1987, c. *376*]: A contract for development of the Foxhunter radar for the Tornado air defence aircraft was placed with GEC Avionics in 1976 on a cost-plus basis. At that time the development phase was due to be completed by 1981. Subsequently a fixed price production programme for an interim standard of the radar was agreed with GEC Avionics. Deliveries of the interim radar have been made since early 1986. The total Ministry of Defence requirement is for 200 radars including parts. (A further 32 radars have been ordered to meet the requirements of Saudi Arabia.)

The Foxhunter radar was the first airborne pulse doppler radar to be developed in the United Kingdom, and inevitably some technical obstacles were encountered during the course of development. The radar does not

meet all the requirements of the Royal Air Force, but radars to an agreed interim standard have already been delivered.

My Department is at present negotiating new contract arrangements for the programme, to implement a set of agreed modifications to achieve the required performance. Discussions have been held with the company on management aspects and the payment and reporting conditions that my Department will require as part of the contract conditions. My Department and GEC Avionics are currently negotiating towards a firm price for this work, with the aim of placing a new contract with GEC Avionics by the autumn of this year.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Expenditure

Q102. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she will invite the next meeting of the European Council to review the functions and powers of the Court of Auditors in relation to expenditure by the EEC which the court determines to be illegal; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

British Telecom

Mrs. Ann Clwyd asked the Prime Minister what advice was issued to Ministers, prior to privatisation of British Telecom, about participation by Ministers in the purchase of shares in British Telecom.

The Prime Minister: Those Ministers most closely involved in the flotation of British Telecom were told that it would be ill-advised to apply for BT shares at the time of flotation. Other Ministers were advised that there was no general bar on applying for shares, subject to the normal requirement that there should be no conflict of interest.

Ministers were also advised that subsequent purchases of BT shares came under the general guidance given to Ministers on taking office.

Privatisation (Share Purchases)

Mrs. Ann Clwyd asked the Prime Minister if the advice to Ministers about the conduct of their financial affairs has been revised to take account of the opportunities for purchasing shares in privatised companies.

The Prime Minister: There has been no change to the general guidelines to Ministers on the conduct of their financial affairs. It has been the usual practice to issue specific advice to Ministers about the purchase of shares in privatised companies, which were formerly in public ownership, at the time of flotation.

Engagements

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 April.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENERGY

North Sea Oil (Personnel)

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the most recent figures available to him of the numbers of personnel working offshore on the United Kingdom continental shelf; how many are *(a)* United Kingdom nationals, *(b)* European Economic Community nationals other than United Kingdom, *(c)* United States nationals and *(d)* others; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The numbers requested are as follows:

	Personnel offshore on 30 September 1986	
	Totals	*of which, on fixed installations*
United Kingdom citizens	10,742	6,119
European Community nationals (excluding United Kingdom citizens)	436	153
United States nationals	90	24
Others	458	88
	11,726	6,384

These figures have been extracted from the Inland Revenue's 1986 survey of the offshore work force, which covers construction workers and personnel on fixed installations, mobile drilling rigs, service vessels and support barges. The only non-EC countries with more than 40 nationals on the UKCS at the time of the survey were Norway (230 personnel, three on fixed installations), the USA (90 personnel, 24 on fixed installations) and Sweden (79 personnel, two on fixed installations). The figures given are of personnel counted; in reporting its survey the Inland Revenue's practice is to multiply the total counted by 1.9 to allow for shift working and seasonal variations.

The entry and stay of non-EC nationals in the United Kingdom is controlled by the Home Office under the Immigration Act 1971. The Act does not extend offshore.

TRANSPORT

Third Party Insurance

57. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make compulsory the display in a motor vehicle of a certificate that the vehicle has third party insurance cover.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Such display would not give conclusive evidence of insurance and in some circumstances could be positively misleading.

Roads

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the motorway and trunk road contracts with a works cost of £1 million or more which his Department intends to award for 1987-88 showing, in each case, the total value of the contract and the expenditure likely to be incurred in that year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows. The national road construction contracts actually let in 1987-88 will differ from this list, depending on the progress on outstanding statutory and other procedures. Other schemes not listed may start in 1987-88 if progress with their procedures is faster than currently expected.

£ million

Route	*Title*	*Works cost estimate*	*Forecast expenditure in 1987-88*
	We plan to let contracts on the following schemes which have completed all their statutory procedures:		
M25	Widening between junctions 11-13	24	9·0
M40	Oxford to Birmingham (Warwick section)	55	15·0
M62	Eastbound Climbing Lane (junctions 21-22)	3	0·5
M62	Westbound Climbing Lane (junctions 24-25)	2	0·0
M63	Stretford to Eccles improvement stage 4	7	1·5
M62	Manchester motorway box (M62, M63, M66) signal improvements	21	1·7
A2	London boundary to M2 improvement contract 4	1	0·8
A3	Compton to Shackleford improvement	8	3·4
A10	Melbourn bypass	4	1·4
A16	South of Haven Bridge Boston	3	1·5
A17	Long Sutton/Sutton Bridge bypass	12	4·5
A30	Blackwater bypass	4	1·4
A34	Hanford grade separated junction	5	3·1
A34	Whitway diversion	5	2·5
A35	Dorchester bypass	8	2·0
A39	Barnstaple bypass	15	3·5
A43	Peartree Hill to Wendlebury	22	4·0
A46	Coventry eastern bypass	23	9·0
A47	Acle bypass	7	1·9
A49	Leominster bypass	9	5·2
A69	Horsley to Corbridge improvement	3	2·3
A69	Newcastle western bypass	56	10·8
A69	Newcastle western bypass advanced works	8	6·0
A361	Newtown to Barnstaple	19	3·0
A417	Birdlip bypass	2	0·0
	Sub-total (25 schemes)	326	94·0
	We also aim to let contracts on the following schemes for which statutory procedures are still outstanding:		
M3	Compton to Bassett improvement	18	4·0
M40	Oxford to Birmingham (Banbury bypass)	150	0·5
A6	Barton bypass	6	0·0
A17	Fosdyke bypass	3	1·5
A19	Peterlee grade separated junction	2	1·0
A27	Pevensey bypass	6	1·5
A41	Bicester southern bypass	3	0·0
A42	Measham Ashby bypass	34	7·8
A46	Newark relief road	27	5·0
A52	Bottesford bypass	4	1·7
A52	Nottingham outer relief road, Abbey street grade separated junction	4	0·0
A435	Alcester bypass	8	0·0
A49	Prees bypass	2	0·0
A140	Dickleburgh bypass	2	0·1
A696	Woolsington bypass	9	0·0
	Sub-total (15 schemes)	274	23·1
	Total (40 schemes)	606	117·1

Note:

The works cost estimates given are pre-tender estimates of the cost of the road schemes. In addition to the main works contract, they include ancillary items and statutory undertakers' fees. The actual value of the contracts when let may differ from those quoted above.

Drivers (Visual Impairment)

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department is monitoring any overseas studies into the use of delineation to counteract visual impairment in the case of drivers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am not aware of overseas studies of this kind. The topic is not in the current research programme.

Freightliner Terminal (Edinburgh)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the stages in consultation and the bodies contacted prior to the close of the Freightliner terminal in Edinburgh.

Mr. David Mitchell: Freightliners Ltd. took its decision to rationalise its business on commercial grounds. It informed Ministers of its decision before it was announced on 9 January. It has since consulted those most closely affected — customers, staff and unions — on the implications of its decision.

Cross-Channel Ferries

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation requiring cross-Channel ferry operators to install black box recorders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These recorders can be valuable in the investigation of certain casualties, but they are still being developed: technical standards and specifications need to be agreed and production costs established. It is premature at this time to consider whether the device should be installed on board ship on a statutory basis.

Aircraft Safety

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet the Civil Aviation Authority and the Manchester fire authority regarding their views on the number of aircraft seats which should be removed following the inquest recommendations on the accident at Manchester airport in August 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. Air safety matters are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Underground Passengers (Police Film)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to why passengers alighting at Fulham Broadway Underground station on Saturday afternoon 21 March were filmed by the police, as to what use has been made of the films, and as to whether the films are available to those filmed for viewing.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The British Transport police's open use of hand-held camera equipment at Underground stations is an important and integral part of the measures agreed between the Government, the police and the football authorities to combat hooliganism associated with football. The procedure is complementary to the use of closed circuit television operated by police forces at all first and second division League football grounds; the aim being to deter troublemakers and assist the police in their public order and public safety duties.

I understand that BTP's camera was in use on 21 March because of the high proportion of supporters using the Underground to attend the West Ham versus Chelsea fixture. No trouble amongst the supporters occurred and the film was wiped clean.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Radio Spectrum

Sir John Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish the report from CSP International on the feasibility of introducing market forces into the management of radio spectrum.

Mr. Pattie: I have now received the final report by CSP International entitled "Deregulation of the Radio Spectrum in the UK." This complex study has taken nearly two years to complete and deals with all types of civil use of the radio spectrum. A steering group, including officials of my Department, has overseen development of the work, but the views expressed in the report are those of an independent firm of consultants. The Department is still appraising its full implications for radio users and spectrum management policy. The study does not therefore necessarily anticipate the future attitude of the Department on policies for spectrum management.

None the less, the findings of the study will be of interest to a wide range of existing and potential users of spectrum, service providers and manufacturers of equipment. The report is being published today by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and my Department would welcome views and comments on the analysis and proposals in the report, particularly the scope for deregulation and frequency planning organisations.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Central Transport Users' Consultative Committee

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will now appoint Mr. James Towler of Leeds to the Central Transport Users' Consultative Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 30 March, at column 360.

Science and Technology Grants

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will specify the number of claims made to his Department during 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 by companies based in Wales for science and technology grants; and if he will identify how many of the claims had projected costs below £100,000.

Mr. Butcher: The total number of applications from companies based in Wales, for project support under the principal schemes of the Science and Technology Act, are as follows. Applications with eligible project costs below £100,000 are listed separately.

Number of applications

	Total	With project costs below £100,000
1979-80	16	9
1980-81	16	8
1981-82	30	10
1982-83	47	17
1983-84	89	50
1984-85	43	18

Hereford Bye Street Gate Sculptures

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if an export licence has been granted at any time in respect of the Hereford Bye Street Gate sculptures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Bye Street Gate sculptures are understood to have been in this country since at least 1965. The Department's records of export licences are retained for no more than 10 years.

Company Directors

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many company directors have been prosecuted and disqualified as a result of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 March 1987, c. *444*]: This Act, which consolidated the disqualification provisions of the Insolvency Act 1985 and the Companies Act 1985, came into effect on 29 December 1986. At that date, there were 453 disqualification orders on the register, subsequently, a further 22 orders have been notified.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the United Kingdom share of European Economic Community exports of goods in Standard Industrial Trade Classifications 5, 6, 7, and 8, respectively, in 1979, 1985 and the latest period of 12 months for which figures are available; and what information he has as to how these compare with the share held by Germany, France and Italy.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 1 April 1987]: The information is in the following table:

Shares of European Community[1] exports (per cent.)

	Standard International Trade Classification Sections			
	5	6	7	8
1979				
United Kingdom	14·5	15·2	14·7	13·2
France	14·8	15·5	17·8	13·9
Federal Republic of Germany	33·4	26·7	39·1	25·6
Italy	6·8	12·9	11·1	25·9
1985				
United Kingdom	13·2	10·9	14·8	13·9
France	16·7	15·3	15·2	12·9
Federal Republic of Germany	32·2	28·3	39·9	25·3
Italy	7·4	14·8	11·7	25·2
12 months to November 1986				
United Kingdom	13·1	10·5	13·1	12·7
France	14·9	14·6	14·8	12·3
Federal Republic of Germany	33·9	29·3	41·3	26·5
Italy	7·2	14·6	11·8	24·7

[1] Present membership throughout.
Source: Eurostat.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bee Husbandry Committee

Mr. Livesey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider reviving the bee husbandry committee of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Our regular contacts with the representative beekeeping organisations keep us in touch with current problems and I see no reason to revive this committee.

Milk Processing

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to prevent dairies or dairy farmers from adding a substance to milk to nullify the effect of antibiotics to enable it to be processed into cheese.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 1st April 1987]: It is already an offence under section 2 of the Food Act 1984 to sell to the purchaser's prejudice any food which is not of the nature substance or quality demanded by the purchaser. In addition, a dairy which used a substance as described by my hon. Friend in the manufacture of cheese would contravene the more specific provisions of the Cheese Regulations 1970, as amended.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Chess

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to promote the playing of chess in schools.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government have no specific plans to promote the playing of chess in schools as this is a matter for schools themselves. However, the Department provides a regular grant towards the administrative costs of the British Chess Federation which aims to encourage the study and practice of chess, and we would wish to see as many young people as possible being given the opportunity to play.

General Certificate of General Education

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received any recent representations from education authorities about funding of the general certificate secondary education examinations.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Primary School Places

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a table showing for each local education authority in Greater London that replied to both of his Department's circular letters dated 5 February 1982 and 30 June 1986 requesting information on sub-standard primary school places *(a)* the capital allocations made for each year 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive, in cash terms, and *(b)* the capital expenditure bids submitted for each year 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive, in cash terms; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for each metropolitan district education authority outside Greater London that replied to both of his Department's circular letters dated 5 February 1982 and 30 June 1986 requesting information on sub-standard primary school places *(a)* the capital allocations made for each year 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive, in cash terms, and *(b)* the capital expenditure bids submitted for each year 1982-83 to 1985-36 inclusive, in cash terms; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will publish a table showing for each non-metropolitan county education authority that replied to both of his Department's circular letters dated 5 February 1982 and 30 June 1986 requesting information on sub-standard primary school places *(a)* the capital allocations made for each year 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive, in cash terms, and *(b)* the capital expenditure bids submitted for each year 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive, in cash terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his replies*, 12 March 1987, c. *262*]: Funding for local education authority capital expenditure is not provided by the Department, but is the responsibility of the LEAs. The level of capital spending they may undertake in any year is, however, limited to the allocation notified to them by the Department, plus the flexibilities permitted by the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Capital allocations are calculated by applying a standard set of criteria to the information supplied by all LEAs on a common basis. The information requested for the years 1982-83 to 1985-86 broken down between authorities within Greater London, metropolitan districts and non-metropolitan authorities is set out in the table.

Plans for and allocations in respect of LEA prescribed expenditure, 1982-83 to 1985-86

£ thousands

Local education authority	*1985-86* *Allocation*	*LEA plans*
(Greater London)		
Barking	947	1,579
Barnet	2,612	5,825
Bexley	504	1,396
Brent	891	4,619
Bromley	628	4,518
Croydon	2,170	3,626
Ealing	2,451	3,352
Enfield	966	1,375
Haringey	895	3,644
Harrow	299	3,007
Havering	334	1,013
Hillingdon	521	2,368
Hounslow	1,566	4,638
Kingston-upon-Thames	2,131	4,070
Merton	2,277	4,226
Newham	2,558	7,672
Redbridge	1,330	1,738
Richmond-upon-Thames	379	752
Sutton	474	966
Waltham Forest	985	2,334
Inner London	15,080	27,686
(Metropolitan districts)		
Birmingham	3,695	6,569
Coventry	3,094	7,419
Dudley	2,671	7,016
Sandwell	1,914	4,429
Solihull	642	1,297
Walsall	1,329	3,222
Wolverhampton	2,047	3,793
Knowsley	973	1,986
Liverpool	4,870	8,461
St. Helens	1,827	3,190
Sefton	1,671	2,060
Wirral	766	2,585
Bolton	570	1,317
Bury	803	1,507
Manchester	7,450	17,545
Oldham	1,014	2,650
Rochdale	1,802	2,885
Salford	1,551	2,891
Stockport	1,411	2,691
Tameside	532	1,360
Trafford	1,594	3,208
Wigan	1,464	3,990
Barnsley	1,090	1,226
Doncaster	424	1,353
Rotherham	481	1,751
Sheffield	3,497	8,044
Bradford	8,269	13,383
Calderdale	830	2,305
Kirklees	3,304	6,955
Leeds	3,325	9,301
Wakefield	1,438	3,307
Gateshead	1,122	3,714
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,716	3,948
North Tyneside	2,235	4,300
South Tyneside	1,339	2,851
Sunderland	3,047	4,679
(Non-Metropolitan (counties)		
Isles of Scilly	—	—
Avon	3,951	10,965
Bedfordshire	1,625	5,427
Berkshire	7,490	11,584
Buckinghamshire	5,978	12,649
Cambridgeshire	4,387	6,506
Cheshire	5,085	9,518
Cleveland	4,493	7,482
Cornwall	3,319	4,523
Cumbria	3,803	5,254
Derbyshire	7,239	10,794
Devon	6,405	11,046
Dorset	5,265	8,666
Durham	2,995	6,415
East Sussex	4,870	7,993
Essex	11,679	28,705
Gloucestershire	4,652	7,261
Hampshire	11,844	23,877
Hereford and Worcester	1,480	2,688
Hertfordshire	5,960	8,417
Humberside	4,138	7,400
Isle of Wight	1,230	2,125
Kent	5,200	9,481

Local education authority	1985-86 Allocation	1985-86 LEA plans
Lancashire	15,136	20,050
Leicestershire	6,718	12,299
Lincolnshire	3,532	8,834
Norfolk	3,070	6,698
North Yorkshire	3,798	6,625
Northamptonshire	4,492	6,268
Northumberland	1,254	2,322
Nottinghamshire	3,421	4,810
Oxfordshire	3,650	9,134
Shropshire	3,924	5,680
Somerset	1,243	2,941
Staffordshire	9,717	13,621
Suffolk	3,871	6,505
Surrey	4,365	9,717
Warwickshire	1,703	3,105
West Sussex	3,429	5,641
Wiltshire	3,478	6,314

Plans for and allocations in respect of LEA prescribed expenditure 1982-83 to 1985-86

£ thousands

Local education authority	1982-83[1] allocation[2]	1982-83[1] LEAs' plans	1983-84[1] allocation	1983-84[1] LEAs' plans	1984-85 allocation	1984-85 LEAs' plans
Greater London						
Barking	2,391	—	2,928	—	1,442	695
Barnet	2,214	—	1,538	—	2,453	2,759
Bexley	679	—	1,633	—	845	1,399
Brent	836	—	1,180	—	1,678	2,576
Bromley	947	—	841	—	492	3,777
Croydon	358	—	800	—	1,227	1,749
Ealing	1,817	—	693	—	1,347	2,721
Enfield	457	—	311	—	576	901
Haringey	2,071	—	1,597	—	1,090	2,640
Harrow	337	—	305	—	523	2,785
Havering	390	—	299	—	216	894
Hillingdon	1,685	—	896	—	1,068	4,362
Hounslow	1,987	—	2,611	—	3,063	4,987
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,982	—	2,270	—	1,330	2,673
Merton	386	—	408	—	993	2,098
Newham	2,501	—	2,084	—	2,039	4,232
Redbridge	912	—	872	—	1,006	1,971
Richmond-upon-Thames	373	—	357	—	735	2,106
Sutton	157	—	266	—	451	1,011
Waltham Forest	1,694	—	1,624	—	889	2,613
Inner London	12,444	—	9,683	—	9,703	2,045
Metropolitan Districts						
Birmingham	5,976	—	5,220	—	6,484	9,533
Coventry	3,722	—	3,478	—	2,919	5,188
Dudley	2,361	—	3,950	—	3,516	5,460
Sandwell	1,651	—	1,436	—	1,705	3,453
Solihull	371	—	356	—	723	1,130
Walsall	3,019	—	1,340	—	1,026	4,116
Wolverhampton	2,471	—	2,269	—	2,375	3,890
Knowsley	420	—	665	—	895	1,174
Liverpool	3,462	—	3,768	—	4,243	6,973
St. Helens	3,360	—	2,384	—	2,111	3,031
Sefton	379	—	578	—	824	2,334
Wirral	656	—	2,403	—	2,117	4,114
Bolton	2,867	—	2,047	—	1,536	2,229
Bury	638	—	982	—	1,030	1,824
Manchester	3,867	—	4,349	—	6,997	11,160
Oldham	852	—	780	—	968	1,778
Rochdale	1,853	—	1,174	—	1,452	3,805
Salford	1,369	—	1,038	—	822	2,230
Stockport	1,384	—	1,067	—	1,770	1,540
Tameside	1,526	—	1,871	—	1,690	3,116
Trafford	404	—	693	—	1,027	1,631
Wigan	2,624	—	2,518	—	2,004	3,041
Barnsley	402	—	384	—	401	865
Doncaster	1,512	—	1,386	—	1,226	1,778
Rotherham	406	—	515	—	471	1,182
Sheffield	2,667	—	3,439	—	3,007	5,035
Bradford	4,447	—	6,969	—	6,707	18,220
Calderdale	999	—	1,293	—	1,090	3,408
Kirklees	4,046	—	4,102	—	3,753	6,746
Leeds	4,826	—	3,381	—	2,899	5,184

Local education authority	1982-83[1] allocation[2]	1982-83[1] LEAs' plans	1983-84[1] allocation	1983-84[1] LEAs' plans	1984-85 allocation	1984-85 LEAs' plans
Wakefield	2,711	—	2,044	—	1,596	3,993
Gateshead	501	—	1,003	—	572	3,934
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,092	—	3,134	—	2,265	3,600
North Tyneside	868	—	606	—	721	3,673
South Tyneside	1,668	—	1,181	—	1,280	3,765
Sunderland	2,780	—	2,927	—	2,862	4,354
Non-Metropolitan Counties						
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—
Avon	4,296	—	5,853	—	5,270	11,121
Bedfordshire	4,142	—	2,437	—	2,439	4,534
Berkshire	4,875	—	8,826	—	8,227	10,238
Buckinghamshire	7,104	—	6,605	—	6,854	18,602
Cambridgeshire	5,462	—	6,370	—	5,039	6,655
Cheshire	6,185	—	8,213	—	7,366	10,594
Cleveland	5,669	—	4,009	—	3,626	7,463
Cornwall	5,124	—	5,548	—	4,377	6,943
Cumbria	1,374	—	2,618	—	3,982	8,026
Derbyshire	8,490	—	6,849	—	6,546	9,885
Devon	7,757	—	4,817	—	7,832	9,087
Dorset	5,578	—	4,736	—	5,385	8,744
Durham	2,037	—	1,711	—	2,054	4,271
East Sussex	4,965	—	5,567	—	4,601	10,389
Essex	7,236	—	7,357	—	6,604	17,675
Gloucestershire	2,582	—	2,974	—	2,772	6,416
Hampshire	9,617	—	10,638	—	9,666	20,652
Hereford and Worcester	2,346	—	1,504	—	1,669	3,378
Hertfordshire	3,232	—	5,473	—	5,479	5,912
Humberside	6,761	—	7,133	—	6,883	11,677
Isle of Wight	475	—	541	—	948	1,445
Kent	5,751	—	4,821	—	4,347	8,716
Lancashire	8,308	—	11,069	—	11,055	13,646
Leicestershire	6,430	—	5,234	—	7,074	8,229
Lincolnshire	3,799	—	3,442	—	4,455	9,022
Norfolk	5,196	—	5,735	—	4,261	7,771
North Yorkshire	2,524	—	2,703	—	5,675	11,725
Northamptonshire	5,085	—	3,916	—	4,179	7,059
Northumberland	2,291	—	1,481	—	1,002	2,580
Nottinghamshire	4,903	—	2,493	—	2,666	4,376
Oxfordshire	4,273	—	4,014	—	3,245	4,194
Shropshire	3,132	—	2,727	—	2,072	4,359
Somerset	1,517	—	3,127	—	2,559	3,367
Staffordshire	8,428	—	7,676	—	10,691	15,277
Suffolk	3,607	—	3,752	—	4,348	5,554
Surrey	3,884	—	3,733	—	4,340	8,416
Warwickshire	1,367	—	1,991	—	1,428	2,781
West Sussex	2,306	—	3,705	—	5,027	6,544
Wiltshire	2,978	—	3,136	—	3,810	6,771

Teachers (Special Qualifications)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department on the numbers of teachers in each local education authority with special qualifications relevant to the teaching of pupils with statements under the Education Act 1981, other than teachers employed full-time in special schools; if he will publish what information is available for the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply, of 23 March 1987, c. 32*]: Individual teachers' records held by this Department for pension purposes include information on some special qualifications for teaching children with handicaps. Not all of the qualifications covered carry a salary benefit so there may be some under-recording. The latest available information is for 31 March 1985 and is given for each local education authority in England.

Full-time teachers with special qualifications for teaching children with handicaps

England: Maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools 31 March 1985 (Provisional)

	Special Classes	Teaching in Other Classes	Total
Barking	4	3	7
Barnet	5	9	14
Bexley	8	3	11
Brent	4	5	9
Bromley	10	3	13
Croydon	5	6	11
Ealing	6	5	11
Enfield	2	3	5
Haringey	2	8	10
Harrow	7	4	11
Havering	3	6	9
Hillingdon	2	9	11
Hounslow	4	4	8
Kingston	3	0	3
Merton	1	1	2
Newham	2	2	4

	Special Classes	Teaching in Other Classes	Total
Redbridge	3	4	7
Richmond	0	3	3
Sutton	1	3	4
Waltham Forest	0	4	4
ILEA	18	96	114
Birmingham	13	33	46
Coventry	7	16	23
Dudley	6	5	11
Sandwell	7	11	18
Solihull	7	7	14
Walsall	6	8	14
Wolverhampton	16	13	29
Knowsley	3	5	8
Liverpool	3	33	36
St. Helens	4	12	16
Sefton	3	11	14
Wirral	2	10	12
Bolton	0	5	5
Bury	4	7	11
Manchester	0	6	6
Oldham	0	5	5
Rochdale	7	8	15
Salford	5	5	10
Stockport	7	4	11
Tameside	3	4	7
Trafford	5	2	7
Wigan	2	5	7
Barnsley	5	7	12
Doncaster	4	9	13
Rotherham	7	4	11
Sheffield	13	21	34
Bradford	6	9	15
Calderdale	0	8	8
Kirklees	9	8	17
Leeds	0	20	20
Wakefield	0	3	3
Gateshead	2	11	13
Newcastle	6	24	30
North Tyneside	4	6	10
South Tyneside	4	9	13
Sunderland	7	4	11
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0
Avon	6	59	65
Bedfordshire	3	23	26
Berkshire	13	22	35
Buckinghamshire	1	24	25
Cambridgeshire	3	36	39
Cheshire	33	16	49
Cleveland	1	27	28
Cornwall	16	13	29
Cumbria	14	5	19
Derbyshire	27	35	62
Devon	5	35	40
Dorset	9	9	18
Durham	4	19	23
East Sussex	10	25	35
Essex	26	25	51
Gloucestershire	4	29	33
Hampshire	16	36	52
Hereford and Worcester	18	23	41
Hertfordshire	10	11	21
Humberside	27	37	64
Isle of Wight	3	3	6
Kent	12	39	51
Lancashire	24	27	51
Leicestershire	31	37	68
Lincolnshire	16	16	32
Norfolk	12	13	25
North Yorkshire	9	23	32
Northamptonshire	20	16	36
Northumberland	8	10	18
Nottinghamshire	15	23	38
Oxfordshire	9	13	22
Shropshire	5	9	14
Somerset	15	13	28

Higher Education Colleges

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list alphabetically all the colleges in England providing higher education work with 50 per cent. or more of students on advanced courses indicating in which local education authority, British and European parliamentary constituencies they fall.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 March 1987, c. *448*]: The relevant institutions are listed alphabetically, together with the percentage of advanced work (based on total home and EC student full-time equivalent numbers) and, where appropriate, their local education authority. Information on the British and European parliamentary constituencies in which they fall is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Institution and Local Education Authority[1]	Percentage
Bath CHE, Avon	93
Bishop Grosseteste College[2]	100
Bolton IHE, Bolton	91
Bretton Hall CHE, Wakefield	97
Brighton Polytechnic, East Sussex	97
Bristol Polytechnic, Avon	98
Bulmershe CHE, Berkshire	100
College of Ripon and York St. John[2]	100
College of St. Mark and St. John[2]	80
College of St. Paul and St. Mary[2]	90
Camborne School Mines, Cornwall	100
Cambridge Institute of Education[2]	100
Canterbury College of Art, Kent	69
Central School of Speech and Drama, Inner London	77
Charlotte Mason College, Cumbria	100
Chester CHE[2]	100
Christ Church College, Canterbury[2]	100
City of Birmingham Polytechnic, Birmingham	97
City of London Polytechnic, Inner London	86
Coventry (Lanchester) Polytechnic, Coventry	98
Cranfield Institute of Technology[2]	91
Crewe and Alsager CHE, Cheshire	99
Dartington College of Arts, Devon	95
De La Salle College[2]	99
Derbyshire CHE, Derbyshire	81
Dorset IHE, Dorset	96
Ealing CHE, Ealing	87
Edge Hill CHE, Lancashire	100
Essex IHE, Essex	79
Exeter CA&D, Devon	78
Falmouth School of Art, Cornwall	58
Garnett College, Inner London	100
Goldsmiths' College[2]	99
Harper Adams Agric. College[2]	93
Hatfield Polytechnic, Hertfordshire	99
Homerton College[2]	90
Huddersfield Polytechnic, Kirklees	97
Humberside CHE, Humberside	89
Kent College for the Careers Service, Kent	100
King Alfred's College[2]	100
Kingston Polytechnic, Kingston upon Thames	98
La Sainte Union CHE[2]	100
Lancashire Polytechnic, Lancashire	97
Leeds Polytechnic, Leeds	97
Leicester Polytechnic, Leicestershire	99
Liverpool IHE[2]	98
Liverpool Polytechnic, Liverpool	98
Loughborough CAD, Leicestershire	66

Institution and Local Education Authority[1]	Percentage
Maidstone College of Art, Kent	85
Manchester Polytechnic, Manchester	96
Middlesex Polytechnic, Barnet	98
Nene College, Northamptonshire	61
Newcastle Upon Tyne Polytechnic, Newcastle upon Tyne	98
Newman College[2]	100
North East London Poly, Barking and Dagenham	100
North Riding College of Education, North Yorkshire	100
North Staffordshire Polytechnic, Staffordshire	97
Norwich School of Art, Norfolk	79
Oxford Polytechnic, Oxfordshire	99
Plymouth Polytechnic, Devon	97
Polytechnic of Central London, Inner London	95
Polytechnic of North London, Inner London	98
Polytechnic of the South Bank, Inner London	96
Portsmouth Polytechnic, Hampshire	100
Ravensbourne CDC, Bromley	74
Roehampton IHE[2]	99
Rolle College, Devon	99
Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama, Bexley	100
Royal Academy of Music[2]	100
Royal College of Art[2]	100
Royal College of Music[2]	100
Royal College of Nursing[2]	96
Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester	100
Seale-Hayne College[2]	98
Sheffield City Polytechnic, Sheffield	99
Shuttleworth Agric College[2]	57
Slough CHE, Berkshire	64
South West London College, Inner London	61
Southampton IHE, Hampshire	73
St. Martins College[2]	100
St. Marys College, Twickenham[2]	94
Sunderland Polytechnic, Sunderland	97
Teesside Polytechnic, Cleveland	97
Thames Polytechnic, Inner London	97
Trent Polytechnic, Nottinghamshire	99
Trinity College of Music[2]	99
Trinity and All Saints College[2]	96
West London IHE, Hounslow	90
West Midlands CHE, Walsall	100
West Surrey CA&D, Surry	74
West Sussex IHE, West Sussex	98
Westhill College[2]	100
Westminster College (Oxford)[2]	93
Wimbledon School of Art, Merton	73
Winchester School of Art, Hampshire	74
Wolverhampton Polytechnic, Wolverhampton	99
Worcester CHE, Hereford and Worcester	100
Writtle Agric College, Essex	55

[1] Where appropriate.
[2] Voluntary or other college grant-aided directly by DES.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers—Prisoners Ratio

15. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the ratio of prison officers to prisoners for *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The officer to inmate ratio for 1978 was 1:2·68 and for 1986 was 1:2·47.

Police Interviews (Tape Recording)

17. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces in England and Wales are introducing the tape recording of police interviews with suspects.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The intention is that tape-recording interviews with suspects in police stations, except for the most minor offence, should become standard practice for all police forces in England and Wales by 1991. To date, 34 out of the 43 police forces in England and Wales have been given grant-aid to prepare and equip interview rooms for tape recording.

32. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has made any assessment of the effectiveness of tape recording of police questioning of suspects; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Tape recording of police interviews with suspects has been the subject of field trials which have been monitored by the Home Office research and planning unit under the direction of a national steering committee, including representatives of the judiciary and the legal profession as well as the Home Office and the police. The unit will publish a second report on the trials shortly. In the meantime, I would refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave earlier today in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth).

47. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the most recent progress of trials for the tape recordings of police interviews with suspects.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The two-year field trials, which were held in five police force areas to test equipment and procedures, ended last year. The trials were monitored and evaluated by the Home Office research and planning unit. A further report about this will be published shortly. In the meantime, we have already announced that the intention is that tape recording of interviews with suspects in police stations should become standard police practice by 1991.

Crime Statistics

18. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage *(a)* crime overall and *(b)* crimes of violence have increased in Leicester since June 1979.

Mr. Mellor: We have of course no figures for crime committed overall. Between 1979 and 1986 the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in Leicestershire increased by an average of 7·1 per cent. a year and offences of violence against the person by 6 per cent. a year.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

19. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes are in operation; and what measures his Department uses to monitor their effectiveness.

53. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes are now in operation; and what further increase in their numbers he expects.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are over 28,500 schemes in existence in England and Wales, more than three times as many as this time last year, and police reports suggest that numbers will continue to rise in the foreseeable future.

Steps are being taken to monitor the progress of a number of schemes and preliminary indications suggest that, where they are carefully designed and introduced, crime is reduced. The Home Office has commissioned research on the effectiveness of neighbourhood watch in the Metropolitan police district, the results of which are expected later in the year. Further research has also been commissioned. The results of this work will provide useful lessons in developing neighbourhood watch.

Home Beat Police Officers (London)

20. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many policemen in London are now home beat officers compared with five years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that there are now 1,256 home beat officers in the Metropolitan police district. Information about the position five years ago is not available.

Robbery

21. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the increase in robbery *(a)*between 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* from 1979 to 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The number of offences of robbery recorded by the police in England and Wales increased by an average of 7·6 per cent. a year between 1974 and 1979. In the last five years the average increase was 8·1 per cent.

Wandsworth Prison (Report)

22. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take in the light of the annual report of the board of visitors of Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend is giving careful consideration to the 1986 report of the Wandsworth prison board of visitors and will be writing to the chairman of the board in due course.

Defendants (Statistics)

23. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of defendants currently waiting to stand trial in England and Wales have been detained for a period in excess of 110 days.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available centrally but it is estimated that on 31 January 1987 about 27 per cent. of the untried population in prison department

establishments in England and Wales were initially remanded into custody more than 110 days earlier. This period includes any time spent on bail after the original remand in custody.

Under-Age Drinkers

24. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the initiatives that are being taken to combat alcohol abuse by under-age drinkers.

Mr. Mellor: A working group of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention is reviewing the problem of under-age drinking and will publish a report and recommendations in November. The Home Office crime prevention unit is helping local agencies to establish a demonstration project in Coventry, which will develop local strategies to tackle alcohol-related crime including under-age drinking. These initiatives are complementary to the health education work being undertaken by the Department of Health and Social Security, and the Department of Education and Science.

AIDS (Prisoners)

25. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 5 March, *Official Report*, column *685*, he will make it his policy to carry out tests on a representative cross-section of prisoners to assess the proportion of the prison population who are HIV positive.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Police-Public Co-operation

26. **Mr. Forth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take further steps to involve the public in a partnership with the police in the fight against crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are developing a new national crime prevention campaign which will show some of the ways in which the community can contribute to the prevention of crime. The Home Office has set aside £3·4 million for this campaign during 1987-88 with provision to sustain the campaign over the next two years. With the campaign we shall be publishing a handbook describing a wide range of crime prevention projects in which all sections of the community can participate.

36. **Mr. Colin Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans for an initiative to improve the present relationship between public and police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that relations between the police and most members of the public are already good; but neither the Home Office nor the police are in any way complacent about this. Good relations between police and public are highly desirable in their own right, and they are also an essential element in an effective crime prevention strategy. We shall therefore continue to encourage the development of police-community consultations about local policing issues, more involvement by the police with young people in schools or in leisure activities, crime prevention initiatives such as neighbourhood watch, the increased use of foot patrols and other methods of policing which increase the level of contact between police and public.

Inner City Areas

27. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department is conducting into the effects of deprivation in inner city areas.

Mr. Mellor: The Home Office research and planning unit carries out a substantial programme of research on the effects of crime in deprived areas. The British crime survey (of which there will be a further sweep later this year) provides the broader picture. Detailed studies include work on racial attacks, on crime prevention in urban areas, on the effects of housing on crime and the problems of inner-city housing estates. The 1986-87 programme of the research and planning unit is in the House of Commons Library and the 1987-88 programme will be published in June this year.

Crime Prevention

28. **Mr. Straw** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to deal with the increase in rape, robbery, theft and burglary.

Mr. Mellor: Different measures will be needed to deal with different types of offences. The Government's broad strategy and some of the specific measures were are taking are set out in "Criminal Justice: A Working Paper", which was published in November.

35. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what expenditure is planned by his Department for the year 1987-88 on crime prevention work.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In addition to expenditure on the police, we plan expenditure of some £6·1 million in 1987-88 on crime prevention publicity, the crime prevention centre and supporting five local demonstration projects.

Bail Hostels

29. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on bail hostels.

Mr. Mellor: There are 102 approved bail hostels, probation hostels and combined probation and bail hostels in England and Wales, all of which can accommodate persons who have been released on bail on condition that they reside there. They also take persons who are the subject of a probation order requiring them to live in a particular hostel and, for short periods, persons who are receiving statutory after-care following their release from prison. They are subject to the Approved Probation Hostel and Home, and Bail Hostel Rules 1976, augmented by Home Office circulars, and the Department meets 80 per cent. of their cost. The responsibility for the day-to-day management of most of these hostels is a matter for the area probation service, but 24 are managed by voluntary committees. It is our policy that area probation services should enable the courts to make maximum use of these hostels for the reception of persons

on bail as well as for the accommodation of offenders. Provision is made in public expenditure plans for sufficient hostel places and the position is kept under regular review.

Police Officers (London Street Duty)

30. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether there has been any increase in the time spent by police officers on street duty in London since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that uniformed police constables attached to divisions performed approximately 5,900 man years of street duty in 1986. Comparable information for 1979 is not available.

Crimes (Clear-up Rate)

31. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when was the last occasion on which the number of crimes cleared up fell.

Mr. Mellor: Since 1970 the number of offences cleared up by the police has risen in most years, but there were falls in 1973, 1976, 1978, 1979 and 1986. Numbers of offences cleared up in the previous 10 years are published in the annual Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.17 of the issue for 1985).

48. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the clear-up rate of crime in 1978 and 1986 for Cleveland county.

Mr. Mellor: In Cleveland the ratio of notifiable offences cleared up to offences recorded by the police was 55 per cent. in 1978 and 34 per cent. in 1986.

49. **Mr. Robert C. Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when was the last time that the clear-up rate of crime was less than one third.

Mr. Mellor: The clear-up rate for notifiable offences recorded by the police has been published in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" each year from 1950 onwards (table 2.17 of the issue for 1985). Before 1986 the clear-up rate was never less than one third.

Newham

33. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the level of reported crime in Newham in the light of the Newham crime survey carried out by the Harris Research Centre a copy of which has been forwarded to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the total number of recorded crimes in Newham fell by 2·4 per cent. in 1986 compared with 1985, the number of arrests increased by 2·7 per cent., and the total number of crimes cleared up increased by 47·9 per cent. The Commissioner has not received a copy of the report of the Newham crime survey, which, I understand, is still unpublished.

Autocrime

34. **Mr. Wheeler** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he will take to reduce autocrime; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The working group set up by the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention to consider car security is now following up the recommendations made in its report published last November. The group recognised that the prevention of autocrime is most amenable to initiatives by vehicle manufacturers and security measures by the motorist.

The most significant initiative with which the group has been associated is the production of a British standard on vehicle security, the first part of which was launched towards the end of last year. This seeks to define, for the first time, standards for the performance and use of equipment intended to prevent or deter unauthorised entry into or removal of a motor vehicle. The first part of the standard deals with mechanical locking systems, and further parts will deal with glazing and the protection of in-car entertainment equipment. We are seeking to have the British standard adopted as the basis of a European directive.

As most autocrime offences are committed by casual criminals preying on unprotected and vulnerable cars, we are continuing our efforts to persuade the motorist to be more security conscious. For example, autocrime features again in this year's "Magpies" campaign and the DVLC is resuming the distribution of car security advice leaflets with licence reminders.

We shall continue to urge motor manufacturers to improve the advice on car security which they give to car owners.

New Courthouse (Basildon)

37. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding the building of a new courthouse in Basildon.

Mr. Mellor: The provision of the new magistrates' courthouse is essentially the responsibility of Essex county council, in consultation with the magistrates' courts committee. We have recently set a cost limit for the scheme which will allow Essex county council to proceed to tender stage without further reference to the Home Office.

Firearms

38. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage increase in the number of offences and crimes made known to the police involving the use of firearms over the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms of all types, including air weapons, were reported to have been used are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", (tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the latest edition, for 1985, Cm. 10). In 1985, 9,742 such offences were recorded, 153 per cent. more than in 1975.

Fresh Start

39. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the fresh start proposals in the prison department.

Mr. Mellor: Discussions with the prison service trade unions about the revised offer published on 9 March have been concluded and the unions principally concerned are now in the process of balloting their members. We hope that all involved will seize the opportunity given by the package on offer to provide a fresh start for the prison service.

Police Officers (Ethnic Minorities)

40. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current number of police officers from ethnic minorities compared with the figure for 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 31 January 1987, 933 police officers in England and Wales were members of the ethnic minorities, compared with 268 on 31 December 1979.

Holidaymakers (Postal Votes)

41. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to meet representatives of the electoral registration officers to discuss implementation of the scheme of postal votes for holidaymakers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to meet registration officers' representatives. The provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1985, and the Representation of the People Regulations 1986, which enable holidaymakers to apply for an absent vote, came into operation on 1 January this year in respect of elections on or after 16 February. There was full consultation with the bodies representing electoral registration officers on the content of the regulations, which include the prescribed requirements for absent voting applications from holidaymakers, before the regulations were laid before Parliament.

Guildford Bombing

42. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the new evidence presented since the last statement on the case of those convicted of the Guildford bombing; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have asked Mr. Paul Hill's solicitor to let us have a copy of a statement made by Mrs. Yvonne Fox, who appeared in the "First Tuesday" television programme of 3 March. When this is received, we shall consider whether any further inquiries are necessary. We are already considering other matters raised in the programme and other material sent to us.

Community Crime Prevention

43. **Mr. Matthew Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department has carried out into the effectiveness of community crime prevention schemes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The research and planning unit and the crime prevention unit of the Home Office both carry out substantial programmes of research in this area. Current studies include work on neighbourhood and crime, inner-city housing estates and community involvement in crime prevention. The 1986-87 programme of the research and planning unit is in the Library and the 1987-88 programme will be published in June this year.

Extradition (America)

44. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the United States authorities about extradition procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There have been no recent discussions with the United States authorities on extradition procedures, but officials are in frequent contact with their United States counterparts on extradition cases and related policy issues.

Civil Defence (Nuclear Accidents)

45. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has on the extent to which civil defence measures could be used to cope with a major nuclear reactor accident.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government believe that, particularly at local level, there are many similarities in the practical response to all major emergencies, including nuclear. Local authorities are encouraged to prepare emergency plans on an all hazards basis and those who properly meet their responsibilities under the civil defence regulations will have a range of resources — including trained staff, plans and communications facilities — that can be used effectively in any major peacetime emergency.

Unemployment and Crime

46. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the degree of causal connection between unemployment and crime.

Mr. Mellor: Research has not shown significant associations between increases in recorded crime and increases in unemployment. The article "Unemployment and Crime", in Home Office Research Bulletin No. 14, reviewed research evidence on the association between unemployment and crime and concluded that little could be learned from studies of this topic at aggregate level.

Burglary

50. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the increase in burglary between *(a)* 1974 and 1979 and *(b)* 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Mellor: The number of offences of burglary recorded by the police in England and Wales increased by an average of 2·6 per cent. per year between 1974 and 1979, and by 7·9 per cent. a year between 1979 and 1986. Statistics of recorded offences are published each year in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.10 of the issue for 1985) and for 1986 in Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 4/87. Results from crime surveys imply that much of these increases in recorded burglary was due to a rise in the proportion of domestic burglaries being reported to the police. This rise in reporting is discussed in chapter 2 of the 1984 Command Paper (Cmnd. 9621: paras. 2.6 to 2.13).

Legal Process

51. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce further measures to speed up the legal process.

Mr. Mellor: The steps which we are taking were outlined in the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 17 February at column 559. Regulations introducing statutory time limits on periods in custody in criminal proceedings in the three police areas of Avon and Somerset, Kent and west midlands came into force yesterday.

Crimes of Violence

52. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action Her Majesty's Government are now taking to combat crimes of violence.

Mr. Mellor: We are continuing to provide the police, the courts, the probation service and the prisons with the resources they need and additional help for victims. Last November, working groups of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention published reports on measures which can be taken to prevent commercial robbery and violence associated with licensed premises. Later this year, we hope to issue a free booklet advising women about precautions against violent crime. Our research programme aims at a better understanding of violent crime.

Obscene Publications Bill

54. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the Obscene Publications Bill.

Mr. Mellor: We have received 101 written representations from hon. Members, public and private bodies and members of the public, the majority of which were in favour of my hon. Friend's Bill. My right hon. Friend also met representatives of the Lords and Commons all-party family and child protection group on 25 March who expressed to him the group's support for the Bill.

Mr. David Sands

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will ask the chief constable of Hampshire for a report into the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. David Sands, a former employee of Easams, an associated company of Marconi.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Hampshire police that inquiries are continuing into the death of Mr. Sands, that the matter has been reported to the coroner, and that an inquest will be opened on 3 April.

WALES

Housing Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many houses in each local authority area in Wales are deemed unfit; what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1976-77; and what proportion these figures represent of the housing stock in each area;

(2) what proportion of the public sector housing stock in each of the local authorities in Wales are in need of repairs.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Previous Welsh house condition surveys were carried out in 1968, 1973, 1976 and 1981. The results were published at county level. Reliable estimates of unfitness and repair in each local authority district will not be available until the results of the 1986 Welsh house condition survey became known.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses especially designed for the elderly have been built by each local authority in Wales in each year since 1976-77.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Statistics on dwellings built for the elderly were not collected centrally prior to 1984. The completion figures for the subsequent years are given in the following table:

Local authority dwellings completed for the elderly

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Aberconwy	—	—	—
Alyn and Deeside	39	29	8
Arfon	39	3	—
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	—
Brecknock	—	12	—
Cardiff	46	—	—
Carmarthen	—	—	8
Ceredigion	52	—	6
Colwyn	—	—	—
Cynon Valley	—	—	10
Delyn	—	—	—
Dinefwr	31	—	—
Dwyfor	—	—	—
Glyndwr	—	—	—
Islwyn	33	21	—
Llanelli	—	59	—
Lliw Valley	47	—	33
Meirionnydd	5	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—	—
Monmouth	—	—	—
Montgomeryshire	25	—	3
Neath	38	6	25
Newport	42	4	2
Ogwr	32	—	—
Port Talbot/Afan	—	—	—
Preseli	—	—	—
Radnor	28	—	—
Rhondda	—	—	—
Rhuddlan	37	—	23
Rhymney Valley	8	—	—
South Pembrokeshire	—	20	—
Swansea	—	50	—
Taff-Ely	48	—	12
Torfaen	—	29	26
Vale of Glamorgan	18	18	14
Wrexham Maelor	—	—	—
Ynys Môn	2	—	—
Wales	570	251	170

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses have been built by each local authority in Wales in each year since 1976-77.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

Local authority dwellings completed

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Aberconwy	30	19	9	125	0	123	0	38	0	20	0
Alyn and Deeside	115	165	90	29	32	52	50	86	39	30	33
Arfon	111	43	31	59	31	19	46	4	28	9	0
Blaenau Gwent	269	365	97	58	331	366	67	0	30	48	0
Brecknock	289	217	10	70	49	0	30	24	14	12	0
Cardiff	471	379	298	353	443	367	240	310	344	107	0
Carmarthen	228	109	13	22	66	55	61	132	46	28	18
Ceredigion	161	77	41	89	48	113	86	0	165	0	41
Colwyn	22	28	48	43	109	81	0	50	24	0	18
Cynon Valley	165	211	129	122	40	0	14	0	40	0	0
Delyn	177	50	41	0	39	10	7	0	0	0	0
Dinefwr	30	81	36	34	54	52	2	22	55	16	34
Dwyfor	0	0	3	40	30	27	6	5	0	9	4
Glyndwr	67	24	54	100	13	114	43	23	4	0	0
Islwyn	102	107	80	151	26	119	44	25	64	21	40
Llanelli	238	123	117	70	34	78	26	42	0	67	40
Lliw Valley	122	182	70	211	124	132	91	90	111	22	34
Meirionnydd	103	41	14	33	54	51	16	33	12	0	0
Merthyr Tydfil	187	246	113	78	217	154	12	7	9	0	0
Monmouth	108	178	59	0	93	6	80	71	59	107	74
Montgomeryshire	110	127	48	58	47	41	11	15	41	0	26
Neath	119	55	115	103	56	43	18	71	76	16	26
Newport	462	473	865	159	85	285	172	43	169	67	119
Ogwr	504	293	160	97	131	201	79	9	60	139	40
Port Talbot (Afan)	0	33	64	60	0	24	0	0	0	0	0
Preseli	110	159	140	62	62	3	16	0	0	0	9
Radnor	146	17	22	39	30	20	20	0	69	10	2
Rhondda	74	52	80	77	161	115	27	0	0	0	0
Rhuddlan	17	28	39	24	57	25	37	40	59	24	44
Rhymney Valley	267	492	209	70	169	160	57	73	79	30	15
South Pembrokeshire	95	94	51	87	65	0	0	6	1	20	0
Swansea	530	443	271	153	107	63	126	29	105	57	0
Taff-Ely	136	158	167	102	226	110	62	85	90	0	12
Torfaen	307	332	118	111	155	43	48	83	38	31	34
Vale of Glamorgan	670	408	26	12	69	124	49	24	20	18	36
Wrexham Maelor	242	574	263	6	42	113	69	62	61	66	11
Ynys Môn	80	192	120	106	198	81	59	41	84	18	34
Wales	6,864	6,575	4,111	3,010	3,493	3,370	1,771	1,543	1,996	992	744

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the current and capital expenditure per head on housing in each of the local authorities in Wales during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many households in Wales do not have *(a)* an inside bath, *(b)* an inside toilet and *(c)* a hot water tap in each local authority area; and what proportion of the total of households in each area they represent in each case.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested on inside baths and toilets is shown in the following table, for 1981. Information on the number of households without a hot water tap is not available.

	Households in 1981 without inside toilet		*Households in 1981 without inside bath*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Aberconwy	469	2·48	439	2·32
Alyn and Deeside	665	2·68	390	1·57
Arfon	1,079	5·81	1,040	5·60
Blaenau Gwent	1,932	6·77	1,445	5·06
Brecknock	734	5·20	515	3·65
Cardiff	3,772	3·89	2,023	2·09
Carmarthen	1,244	6·82	1,084	5·94
Ceredigion	1,377	6·56	1,369	6·52
Colwyn	239	1·27	226	1·20
Cynon Valley	3,239	13·37	2,115	8·73
Delyn	749	3·36	518	2·32
Dinefwr	1,029	7·69	580	4·33
Dwyfor	683	7·30	801	8·56
Glyndwr	551	3·93	467	3·33
Islwyn	1,864	8·17	762	3·34
Llanelli	1,691	6·05	919	3·29
Lliw Valley	1,199	5·50	504	2·31

	Households in 1981 without inside toilet		Households in 1981 without inside bath	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Meirionnydd	516	4·53	599	5·26
Merthyr Tydfil	2,519	11·64	1,820	8·41
Monmouth	618	2·54	537	2·21
Montgomeryshire	1,175	6·90	1,122	6·59
Neath	1,198	4·95	622	2·57
Newport	1,222	2·59	942	1·99
Ogwr	2,183	4·89	1,126	2·53
Port Talbot (Afan)	961	5·01	318	1·66
Preseli	843	3·54	769	3·23
Radnor	441	5·76	431	5·63
Rhondda	5,233	17·81	3,682	12·53
Rhuddlan	151	0·75	117	0·58
Rhymney Valley	2,331	6·52	1,462	4·09
South Pembrokeshire	620	4·66	539	4·05
Swansea	3,205	4·84	1,812	2·73
Taff-Ely	1,855	5·76	1,208	3·75
Torfaen	1,071	3·33	713	2·22
Vale of Glamorgan	775	2·07	558	1·49
Wrexham Maelor	1,220	3·08	919	2·32
Ynis Môn	904	3·86	944	4·03

Source: 1981 Population Census.

Homelessness

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many homeless persons there are in each local authority area in Wales; and what proportion of the population of those areas they represent.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information relating to the number of persons currently homeless is not collected centrally. The number of persons accepted as homeless by each local authority during 1986 and the percentage of the population they represent are shown in the following table:

Homeless persons accepted during 1986

Welsh Districts	Homeless persons	
	Accepted	Percentage of population
Aberconwy	153	0·29
Alyn and Deeside	366	0·50
Arfon	51	0·09
Blaenau Gwent	493	0·63
Brecknock	162	0·40
Cardiff	1,751	0·63
Carmarthen	165	0·30
Ceredigion	140	0·23
Colwyn	102	0·20
Cynon Valley	942	1·44
Delyn	391	0·60
Dinefwr	93	0·25
Dwyfor	142	0·54
Glyndwr	55	0·14
Islwyn	136	0·21
Llanelli	371	0·50
Lliw Valley	205	0·34
Meirionnydd	147	0·47
Merthyr Tydfil	179	0·31
Monmouth	664	0·87
Montgomeryshire	97	0·20
Neath	793	1·22
Newport	1,254	0·97
Ogwr	1,667	1·25
Port Talbot/Afan	304	0·59
Preseli	108	0·15
Radnor	23	0·11
Rhondda	323	0·41
Rhuddlan	249	0·46
Rhymney Valley	643	0·62
South Pembrokeshire	165	0·42
Swansea	685	0·37
Taff-Ely	278	0·29
Torfaen	958	1·06
Vale of Glamorgan	427	0·37
Wrexham Maelor	567	0·49
Ynys Môn	62	0·09

Cancer

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales which health authorities in Wales have started computerised schemes for cervical cancer screening and which intend to start such schemes by the end of 1987.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Clwyd and Powys health authorities have already started computerised call and recall systems for cervical cancer screening. East Dyfed (in conjunction with Pembrokeshire), Gwent, Gwnedd and Mid Glamorgan health authorities all intend to implement computerised call and recall systems by the end of this year. South Glamorgan already operates a computerised recall system and hopes to introduce a computerised call system in the Autumn. West Glamorgan health authority also operates a computerised recall system but does not expect to introduce a computerised call system until the beginning of 1988.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average waiting time of women in the Clwyd health authority area who have had tests for cervical cancer to receive details of the test; and how the waiting time compares with the average waiting time for such results elsewhere in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not yet available centrally. Welsh Office circular WHC(86)31 advised all health authorities that test results were to be notified at the most within eight weeks of the test being taken. The Department will shortly be issuing a further circular which, amongst other matters, will ask health

authorities to indicate their performance against this target. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when, later this year, this information is available.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many operations have been performed on women suffering from cervical cancer in *(a)* the Clwyd health authority area and *(b)* Wales as a whole in each of the past five years;

(2) how many operations have been performed on women suffering from cancer of the breast in *(a)* the Clwyd health authority area and *(b)* Wales as a whole in each of the past five years;

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible and place a copy in the Library of the House.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many women have died from cervical cancer in *(a)* the Clwyd health authority area and *(b)* Wales as a whole in each of the past five years;

(2) how many women have died from cancer of the breast in *(a)* the Clwyd health authority area and *(b)* Wales as a whole in each of the past five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

Cause of death	*Number of deaths*				
	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Malignant neoplasm of female breast (ICD174):					
Wales	745	740	748	806	768
Clwyd DHA	115	123	125	114	119
Malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD180):					
Wales	133	118	136	114	139
Clwyd DHA	20	14	22	22	16

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average waiting time of women in the Clwyd health authority area who have had tests for breast cancer to be informed of the results of the test; how long it takes for the requisite surgery to be carried out on those women in need of such surgery; and how these waiting times compare with waiting times elsewhere in Wales.

Mr. Robinson: The information is not collected centrally.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish a table showing urgent cases on hospital in-patient waiting lists in each health authority in Wales and the number of cases waiting per 1,000 population for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will publish a table showing non-urgent cases on hospital in-patient waiting lists in each health authority in Wales and the number of cases waiting per 1,000 population for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The available information is given in the following table. Information for 1979 is not available in the form requested.

In-patient waiting list as at 30 September

	Urgent cases	*Urgent cases per 1,000 population*	*Non-urgent cases*	*Non-urgent cases per 1,000 population*
1980				
Clwyd	177	0·5	4,017	10·4
Dyfed	165	0·5	3,478	10·7
Gwent	1,212	2·8	6,877	15·8
Gwynedd	217	1·0	1,800	7·9
Mid Glamorgan	607	1·1	7,991	14·9
Powys	9	0·1	37	0·3
South Glamorgan	1,068	2·7	4,900	12·5
West Glamorgan	785	2·1	3,732	10·2
1981.				
Clwyd	314	0·8	3,803	9·7
Dyfed	178	0·5	3,431	10·3
Gwent	861	1·9	5,828	13·2
Gwynedd	217	0·9	1,776	7·7
Mid Glamorgan	476	0·9	7,282	13·5
Powys	4	0·04	49	0·4
South Glamorgan	412	1·1	3,770	9·7
West Glamorgan	578	1·6	3,052	8·2
1982				
Clwyd	309	0·8	4,120	10·4
East Dyfed	24	0·1	1,941	8·6
Pembrokeshire	210	1·9	1,618	15·0
Gwent	1,250	2·8	6,292	14·3
Gwynedd	97	0·4	1,705	7·4
Mid Glamorgan	966	1·8	9,517	17·7
Powys	27	0·2	73	0·7
South Glamorgan	1,156	3·0	5,028	12·9
West Glamorgan	432	1·2	3,862	10·5

	Urgent cases	Urgent cases per 1,000 population	Non-urgent cases	Non-urgent cases per 1,000 population
1983				
Clwyd	346	0·9	4,331	11·0
East Dyfed	10	0·04	2,228	9·8
Pembrokeshire	156	1·4	1,369	12·6
Gwent	1,206	2·7	6,730	15·3
Gwynedd	31	0·1	1,620	7·0
Mid Glamorgan	685	1·3	9,247	17·2
Powys	4	0·04	108	1·0
South Glamorgan	1,319	3·4	5,273	13·5
West Glamorgan	461	1·3	3,890	10·6
1984				
Clwyd	331	0·8	4,234	10·7
East Dyfed	7	0·03	2,080	9·2
Pembrokeshire	268	2·5	1,745	16·1
Gwent	963	2·2	6,666	15·2
Gwynedd	43	0·2	1,562	6·7
Mid Glamorgan	592	1·1	9,058	17·0
Powys	—	—	70	0·6
South Glamorgan	[1]912	2·3	[1]6,039	15·3
West Glamorgan	557	1·5	3,134	8·6
1985				
Clwyd	247	0·6	4,303	10·8
East Dyfed	24	0·1	2,202	9·7
Pembrokeshire	454	4·2	1,747	16·0
Gwent	974	2·2	7,048	16·0
Gwynedd	49	0·2	1,905	8·2
Mid Glamorgan	359	0·7	9,322	17·5
Powys	6	0·1	90	0·8
South Glamorgan	[1]1,149	2·9	[1]6,341	16·1
West Glamorgan	554	1·5	3,778	10·4
1986[2]				
Clwyd	187	0·5	4,502	11·3
East Dyfed	7	0·03	2,347	10·4
Pembrokeshire	324	3·0	2,106	19·3
Gwent	949	2·2	7,372	16·7
Gwynedd	61	0·3	1,921	8·2
Mid Glamorgan	332	0·6	8,629	16·2
Powys	—	—	59	0·5
South Glamorgan	1,087	2·8	6,533	16·5
West Glamorgan	661	1·8	4,350	11·9

[1] In addition, there were 637 cases in 1984 and 660 cases in 1985 which could not be classified as either urgent or non-urgent.
[2] Mid-1985 population estimates have been used.

Education Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of pupils in classes of 31 and over in each education authority in Wales for each year since 1979 in *(a)* the maintained primary sector and *(b)* the maintained secondary sector, and showing the percentage of such pupils in relation to the total number of pupils in Wales; and if he will also give the comparable percentage figure for England.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information on the number of pupils in classes analysed in size bands is not collected centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of classes of 31 pupils and over in each education authority in Wales for each year since 1979 in *(a)* the maintained primary sector and *(b)* the maintained secondary sector, and showing the percentage of such classes in relation to the total number of classes in Wales; and if he will also give the comparable percentage figure for England.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The information on the number of classes of 31 pupils and over is given in the following tables.

Information in respect of England is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85		1985-86	
	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes
Maintained primary school classes of 31 or over as at September each year[1]														
Clwyd	400	24·8	355	22·3	396	26·9	370	25·7	353	25·0	376	26·6	363	25·6
Dyfed	89	5·7	90	5·9	75	5·2	74	5·3	65	4·7	69	5·2	95	7·3

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85		1985-86	
	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes	Number of classes	Per cent. of total classes
Gwent	360	20·9	333	19·7	346	21·6	278	18·8	253	16·6	286	19·0	248	16·6
Gwynedd	103	9·6	73	7·0	61	5·8	53	5·4	48	4·8	40	4·2	30	3·2
Mid Glamorgan	527	23·6	470	20·9	508	25·0	375	18·9	326	16·7	408	21·6	397	21·3
Powys	31	3·7	32	6·1	25	5·0	19	3·8	20	4·0	25	5·2	19	4·1
South Glamorgan	388	29·2	336	25·9	336	26·8	316	26·1	305	25·4	289	23·8	323	27·1
West Glamorgan	161	10·5	131	8·8	171	12·0	156	11·1	156	11·4	161	11·9	166	12·3
WALES	2,068	17·8	1,822	16·1	1,918	17·8	1,639	15·7	1,528	14·8	1,634	16·3	1,641	16·4
Maintained secondary school classes of 31 or over as at September each year[1]														
Clwyd	334	29·8	313	28·2	320	29·0	298	27·2	281	25·9	287	27·5	346	33·2
Dyfed	337	35·2	308	31·3	253	26·9	270	29·3	251	25·3	222	24·6	188	21·3
Gwent	916	20·2	275	17·6	271	18·1	263	17·9	238	15·7	201	15·6	168	13·7
Gwynedd	205	29·0	177	23·7	166	22·7	181	24·4	179	24·1	164	23·7	154	23·1
Mid Glamorgan	549	31·6	541	31·1	543	31·8	499	29·2	492	28·8	406	26·8	389	26·3
Powys	93	28·7	78	23·6	74	23·1	77	24·0	70	21·5	72	23·4	53	17·4
South Glamorgan	370	29·3	321	26·1	316	26·3	281	23·2	270	22·7	283	28·3	241	25·0
West Glamorgan	303	25·8	265	23·3	243	22·3	207	19·4	212	20·0	187	19·3	156	16·6
WALES	2,507	28·3	2,278	25·8	2,188	25·5	2,076	24·3	1,983	23·2	1,822	23·6	1,695	22·6

[1] Registered ordinary and remedial classes.
[2] Years 1-5.

ENVIRONMENT

Thamesmead Estate

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes that the Thamesmead Estate should be transferred to Thamesmead Town Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now intends to issue a direction to the London Residuary Body under section 65 of the Local Government Act 1985 to dispose of Thamesmead to Thamesmead Town.

Mr. John Patten: It remains our intention that the future of Thamesmead be settled as soon as possible, in the interests of all the residents and of the board and staff of Thamesmead Town. We are studying the observations made by the courts on 27 and 30 March, in dismissing the applications before them for judicial review, before deciding on next steps.

Derelict Land Grants

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire on Tuesday 17 March, *Official Report*, column *433*, regarding the number of schemes for which derelict land grants have been paid in Staffordshire in the last five years, he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and details of schemes which have attracted grants in *(a)* Lichfield district council, *(b)* Cannock Chase district council and *(c)* Stafford borough council during the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: In the period 1982 to 1987, 10 schemes attracted derelict land grants totalling £1,141,210 in Lichfield district council, 87 schemes attracted derelict land grants totalling £10,508,099 in Cannock Chase district council and one scheme attracted derelict land grant of £288,374 in Staffordshire borough council. Details of these schemes could be made available only at disproportionate cost and would divert staff from the priority task of processing current applications for derelict land grant.

Ammonia

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effects of increasing levels of ammonia in the United Kingdom since 1957; and where the cases occurred.

Mr. Waldegrave: Although ammonia deposition contributes to overall nitrogen loading and in soils could be contributing to increased acidification, no evidence has been found in the United Kingdom of any direct effect of ammonia on crops, trees and vegetation other than in the most extreme case of accidental releases of ammonia from fertiliser plants and industrial processes.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much has been spent by the London Docklands Development Corporation on publicity concerning the Canary wharf development;

(2) when the content of the master building agreement between the London Docklands Development Corporation and the developers of Canary wharf is to be made public;

(3) what public consultation has been carried out in respect of the master building agreement between the London Docklands Development Corporation and the developers of Canary wharf;

(4) how many of the houses and flats built on land owned by the London Docklands Development Corporation which were sold between July and December 1986 were sold to present or former employees of the corporation.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 25 March at columns *163-64*.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to appoint an elected representative from the Association of London Authorities to the board of the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend sees no need at present to make further appointments to the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what the reason was for the appointment of Sir Peter Bowness to the board of the London Residuary Body; and when his appointment will come up for review.

Mr. Chope: Councillor Sir Peter Bowness was appointed to the London Residuary Body as the member representing the London Boroughs Co-ordinating Committee, after consultation with that committee, and in the light of his knowledge and experience of local government. His current appointment expires on 11 August 1988.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Ordnance Survey to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 11 May to 15 May.

Liverpool Arena

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give approval to the Liverpool arena project proposed by the Merseyside Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that Arena Associates Ltd. is proposing to develop a multi-purpose sports complex, known as the Liverpool Arena, on a site near the Albert Dock in Liverpool and within the designated area of the Merseyside Development Corporation. The company has sought Government assistance of £3·6 million towards the £9 million development costs. This matter is currently under consideration and I hope to announce a decision shortly.

Urban Programmes

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what projects currently funded under the urban programmes will begin to lose financial support in 1987-88 in the city of Manchester through the taper mechanism; and what is the total value of this.

Mr. John Patten: The following projects begin to lose financial support in 1987-88 through the taper mechanism. The total sum involved in that year is £57,000.

North Manchester Womens' Aid Refuge.
Morning Star Hostel (Mary & Joseph).
Manchester and Salford Family Service Unit "Drop in".
YDT 42nd Street Community Mental Health.
Manchester and Salford Methodist Mission Family Support Centre.
NACRO Lifeline for Drug Users.
Platt Lane Methodist Church.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will assist local authority planning by bringing forward the date at which decisions on specific projects to be funded under the urban programme are made.

Mr. John Patten: Under the arrangements which ensure the effective targeting of the urban programme, all projects must be put forward and assessed in the context of a strategy set out in an inner area programme (IAP). Each IAP is processed as quickly as possible after it is received. I am keen that local authorities should submit their IAPs well before the beginning of the financial year to which they relate, and for 1987-88 most local authorities have been able to do so.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what projects currently funded under the urban programme will call for financial support in 1987-88 in the city of Manchester.

Mr. John Patten: This will depend on the decision to be taken on Manchester's complete inner area programme for 1987-88, which has yet to be submitted to me.

Housing

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, of 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *331-2*, on what basis his Department estimates the cost of *(a)* building a council house or flat in Greater London at around £7,000 in the first year and *(b)* acquiring a council house or flat for letting in Greater London at around £5,500 in the first year; and if he will identify separately his Department's estimate of the cost of (1) repaying interest on capital, (2) management and (3) maintenance of the property.

Mr. Tracey: The information requested is given in the following table. The figures relate to 1985-86 London costs and are based on an interest rate of 11 per cent.

	New Build £	*Acquisition* £
Interest on capital	[1]6,127	[2]4,645
Management	437	437
Maintenance	413	413
	6,977	5,495

[1] Based on land and construction costs (including fees) for local authority dwellings.

[2] Based on uprated 1984 prices for local authority dwellings plus an allowance of £10,000 for renovation costs. (Since the calculation was made 1985 prices have become available; the effect would be to raise the interest figure shown to £4,708).

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the current and capital expenditure per head on housing in England during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Tracey: Current expenditure by English local authorities and new towns from their housing revenue accounts in 1985-86 represented on average £122 per head of population.

Capital expenditure by local authorities, new towns, the Housing Corporation and central Government on housing in England represented on average £74 per head of population.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total public expenditure on housing in the United Kingdom as a proportion of the gross domestic product in each year from 1976 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Tracey: Total public expenditure on housing in the United Kingdom from 1976 to 1985 is shown in the table

as a percentage of gross domestic product at factor cost. The definition is the same as in the answer given to the hon. Member on 23 May 1986 at columns *370-371* in the *Official Report*. Figures for some of the earlier years have been revised in the light of later information.

Public expenditure on housing as percentage of gross domestic product at factor cost

	Per cent.
1976	3·9
1977	3·6
1978	3·3
1979	3·4
1980	3·5
1981	2·6
1982	2·6
1983[1]	2·9
1984	3·0
1985	2·5

[1] Discontinuity between 1982 and 1983 is due to introduction of housing benefit and consequent exclusion of rent from supplementary benefit paid to tenants.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the objectives of Her Majesty's Government's housing policy.

Mr. John Patten: Our policy is to encourage the maximum spread of owner-occupation, and the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock.

The Government also hope to introduce further legislation to encourage the supply of more homes for renting in the private sector, while ensuring a vigorous housing association movement.

Office and Industrial Premises

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals there are to alter the current demarcation between offices and light industrial premises, particularly with regard to tailors' workshops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: In the consultation paper published on 16 June 1986, the Government set out their proposals for modernising the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order. These included a proposal for the creation of a new "business" class by merging the existing light industrial and office use classes (except for use for financial or professional services provided direct to the public visiting the premises). We are considering the responses which we have received.

Out-of-Town Retail Developments

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the out-of-town retail developments which are currently before his Department for consideration.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what were the total capital allocations in each of the five service blocks in 1985-86 for *(a)* all London boroughs; *(b)* the City of London *(c)* the Greater London council, *(d)* the Inner London education authority, *(e)* the Metropolitan police and *(f)* the whole of Greater London;

(2) what were the total allocations in each of the five service blocks in 1986-87 and 1987-88 for *(a)* all London boroughs, *(b)* the City of London, *(c)* the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, *(d)* the waste regulation authorities, *(e)* the Inner London education authority, *(f)* the Metropolitan police and *(g)* the whole of Greater London.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is in respect of capital allocations issued to date on the five service blocks which make up the DOE/LA1 cash limit. The figures for 1985-86 for the other services block include £10,591,000 supplementary allocations issued to authorities which complied with the Secretary of State's request for restraint on capital expenditure in1984-85. The Metropolitan police do not receive capital expenditure allocations under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 since their expenditure is separately controlled by the Home Office.

Capital Allocations London Authorities

(figures in £000)

	Education	*Personal Social Services*	*Transport*	*Housing*	*Other Services*	*Total DOE/LA1*
1985-86						
All London Boroughs	28,393	11,141	36,100	408,444	41,787	525,865
City of London	0	0	1,400	417	4,864	6,681
Greater London Council (including ILEA)	15,080	0	67,000	74,128	12,908	154,116
All Greater London	43,473	11,141	104,500	482,989	59,639	701,742
1986-87						
All London Boroughs	26,886	12,533	100,900	430,080	36,323	606,722
City of London	0	21	2,500	365	1,933	4,819
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority	0	0	0	0	4,000	4,000
London Waste Disposal and Regulation Authorities	0	0	0	0	2,275	2,275
ILEA	12,575	0	0	0	1,00	13,575
All Greater London	39,461	12,554	103,400	430,445	45,531	631,391
1987-88						
All London Boroughs	29,510	11,882	104,640	386,072	31,029	563,133
City of London	0	0	1,320	334	1,862	3,516

	Education	Personal Social Services	Transport	Housing	Other Services	Total DOE/LAI
London Fire and Civil Defence Authority	0	0	0	0	7,936	7,936
London Waste Disposal and Regulation Authorities	0	0	0	0	3,785	3,785
ILEA	14,957	0	0	0	2,250	17,207
All Greater London	44,467	11,882	105,960	386,406	46,862	595,577

St. George's Hall, Liverpool

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the latest position regarding the future of St. George's Hall, Liverpool.

Mr. John Patten: None. The future of the hall is a matter for its owners, Liverpool city council.

Local Government (Widdicombe Report)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to announce further implementation of the Widdicombe report on local government; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: As my right hon. Friend made clear when the Widdicombe report was published on 19 June, the Government intend to weigh the public response to the report before drawing their own conclusions. The consultation period has ended and the Government are considering the responses received.

Trafalgar Square

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has anything to add to his answer of 19 February to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Mrs. Short) *Official Report*, column *741*, about meetings in Trafalgar square; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have approved a major scheme for a complete refurbishment of Trafalgar square. The cleaning and repair of Nelson's column, which is currently in progress, is the first stage of this exercise and should be completed in May. While the column and the immediate area are surrounded by scaffolding and a hoarding I do not consider it in the interests of public safety to allow meetings on the square which would attract large numbers of people. I have therefore refused permission for some demonstrations by organisations which have traditionally held meetings on the square and would in normal circumstances be permitted to do so.

Each new application will be considered on its merits and in the light of Metropolitan police advice. During the period when the square is cleared prior to the main refurbishment it should be possible for the larger gatherings to be resumed temporarily.

The main refurbishment, which includes relaying the paving, will start in the summer and take about two years. During that time no meetings can be allowed on the square though there will always be some room for pedestrians. The square will, however, be completely cleared in December 1987 and 1988 to allow the traditional Christmas and new year celebrations to take place.

Green Belt

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the area of approved green belt has increased between 1979 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The extent of the approved green belt in England has more than doubled since 1979. In broad terms about 1·8 million acres were approved by 1979 and the figure is now about 4·5 million acres. Estimated figures for each green belt are set out in the table.

The general extent of each green belt is indicated in county structure plans. The detailed boundaries are defined in local plans, where they exist, or in old style development plans. In some areas the detailed boundaries have not yet been settled. For these reasons the figures in the table are approximate.

Approved Green Belts

	1986 Acres (approx)	1979 Acres (approx)	Date of approval
London	1,200,000	757,740	1976
West Midlands	650,000	352,000	1975
Greater Manchester, Central Lancs, Merseyside/Wirral	750,000	3,710[1]	[6]
Tyne & Wear	200,000	98,800	[7]
Nottingham/Derby	200,000	[2]	—
York	50,000	[3]	—
South and West Yorkshire	800,000	312,000	[8]
Oxford	100,000	61,960	1975
Avon	150,000	155,160	[9]
Gloucester/Cheltenham	20,00	14,120	[10]
Stoke-on-Trent	125,000	[4]	—
Cambridge	26,550	4,320	1975
SW Hampshire/SE Dorset	220,000	[5]	—
Burton-Swadlincote	2,000	—	—
Lancaster and Fylde Coast	5,750	—	—
Total	4,498.300	1,759,810	

[1] Green Belt policies were applied on an interim basis to over 306,400 acres.
[2] Green Belt policies were applied on a provisional basis to over 142,650 acres.
[3] Green Belt policies were applied on an interim basis to about 18,900 acres.
[4] Green Belt policies were applied on an interim basis to about 112,640 acres.
[5] Green Belt policies were applied on a provisional basis to about 238,060 acres.
[6] Defined in old development plans which were replaced by structure plans 1979/83.
[7] Defined in old development plans which were replaced by structure plans 1980/81.
[8] Defined in old development plans which were replaced by stucture plans 1979/80.

[9] Defined in old development plans which were replaced by structure plans 1981/85.
[10] Defined in old development plans which were replaced by structure plans 1981.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Emergency Bunkers

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current scheduled date of commencement for the contruction of the proposed three emergency bunkers in Northern Ireland; on which bunker work is to commence first; and what is the up-to-date estimate of the costs of the proposed bunkers.

Mr. Scott: It is proposed that the three Northern Ireland emergency centres will be provided through a phased building programme over the next six years at an estimated cost of £7·8 million. Work on the first of these sites, at Ballymena, is due to start by June 1987. No date has yet been scheduled for work to commence on either of the other sites.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the prepared lists of those who are to go into each of the three proposed bunkers in the event of nuclear attack were last reviewed; and whether those on such lists have been involved in any training or planning meetings.

Mr. Scott: The lists are currently being reviewed. There is a continuing training programme.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what work it is currently envisaged would be carried out in the three proposed emergency bunkers in the event of nuclear attack; and by whom.

Mr. Scott: It is intended that all essential services to the community will be co-ordinated from the three proposed emergency centres should normal peacetime arrangements for these services be threatened or damaged during a war emergency. Personnel who have the necessary expertise for this task will be drawn from all the essential services, from the Northern Ireland Office, the Northern Ireland Departments and from industry.

Mount Eden Park, Belfast

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any decision has yet been taken on the long-term role of the building at Mount Eden park, Belfast.

Mr. Scott: The building at Mount Eden park, Belfast, continues to be used for civil defence training. No decision has yet been taken on its longer term use.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether consultations about arrangements in the event of a nuclear attack or operating the proposed emergency bunkers have taken place with district councils, their officers, area boards or their officers, or officers of public services including water service, roads service and electricity supply.

Mr. Scott: Yes.

Royal Ulster Constabulary (Discrimination)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, pursuant to the recent judgments of the European Court and the decision of the industrial tribunal in respect of the successful claims by a number of full-time and part-time women reserve constables of the Royal Ulster Constabulary that they had been discriminated against by the Chief Constable, he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the date on which the first lawful complaint of discrimination was made by these women against the Chief Officer or the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, *(b)* the dates of the principal hearings before industrial tribunals and courts in Northern Ireland, *(c)* the date on which this issue was brought before the European Court and when it was concluded there and *(d)* the date of the final orders by the industrial tribunal awarding compensation to the women and costs against the Chief Constable.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

a. The first complaint was made to the industrial tribunal on 27 November 1980. Additional complaints were made subsequently by further parties.
b. The principal hearings before the industrial tribunal took place on 28 May 1981, 1 September 1981, 31 December 1981, 21 May 1982, 10 August 1983, 8 August 1984, 28-30 January 1987, 2-5 February 1987 and 9 March 1987.
Hearings before the High Court took place on 29 October 1982, 14 January 1983, 4 February 1983 and 11 February 1983.
Hearings before the Court of Appeal took place on 31 May 1983 and 10 October 1983.
c. The industrial tribunal decided on 8 August 1984 to refer the issue to the European Court of Justice. The court gave its final decision on 15 May 1986.
d. No compensation orders were made by the industrial tribunal as agreement had already been reached with the Chief Constable. Costs were awarded against the Chief Constable on 9 March 1987.

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland pursuant to the recent industrial tribunal decision in respect of full-time and part-time women reserve police officers, what amount of compensation was ordered to be paid to each of these women in recognition of the discrimination the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary was adjudged to have inflicted upon them.

Mr. Scott: None. The tribunal was not called to make compensation orders, as agreement on levels of compensation had been reached between the Chief Constable and the applicants.

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in the light of the recent industrial tribunal decision in respect of full-time and part-time women reserve police officers, he will state what legal costs were ordered to be paid to each of these women.

Mr. Scott: The legal costs incurred in proceedings before the European court and the industrial tribunal were awarded against the Chief Constable of the RUC. The costs have not yet been finalised but I shall write to my hon. Friend when the information is available.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mentally Handicapped People (Civil Rights)

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards civil rights for mentally handicapped people.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if local social security officers are able to make payments to claimants whose carpets are destroyed by flooding or fire and who are in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Lyell: Where a claimant is affected by a disaster — for example, a fire or a flood — and satisfies the provisions of regulation 8 of the Supplementary Benefit (Urgent Cases) Regulations, then a payment may be considered for miscellaneous furniture and household equipment needs, which could include a carpet. It is for the independent adjudication authorities to determine in any individual case whether a disaster has occurred and if a payment is appropriate; and that decision is subject to the claimant's right of appeal to the social security appeal tribunal.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any new information is available on the payment of supplementary benefit to people in residental care and nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: New figures have just become available on the number of people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes claiming supplementary benefit. Provisional results of the quarterly statistical Inquiry of February 1986 show that there were 90,000 people in private and voluntary residential care and nursing homes being helped by supplementary benefit compared to 42,000 in December 1984. There have been suggestions that the supplementary benefit limits for residential care and nursing homes are too low and that people without means of their own can no longer get places in homes. The question is kept under close review but these latest figures certainly do not support such a contention.

The provisional estimates also show that in February 1986 the total cost of the supplementary benefit element of support for people in homes was £459 million with an average weekly payment of £98.08. The increase in average payments is broadly in line with increases in the benefit limits during the period December 1984 to February 1986.

We also now have the preliminary results from the pilot studies, conducted under the auspices of the social policy research unit at the University of York to test the feasibility of assessing the care needs of benefit claimants in private and voluntary residential care homes. The vast majority, 93 per cent. were assessed as needing residential care at the time of admission to the home given the alternative services then available. The assessors were also asked to consider whether residents would have needed residential care if additional services had been available. They considered that if additional ordinary services such as sheltered housing or day care had been available, 90 per cent. would have needed residential care, and that even if more intensive services, such as full-time companion or night sitting service, had been available, residential care would have been needed in 83 per cent. of cases.

The results of the pilot studies need to be used carefully. They are being considered by the joint central and local government working party which is currently looking at the question of harmonisation of financial support for people in residential care and are relevant to the overall review of community care being carried out by Sir Roy Griffiths.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many community psychiatric nurses are employed by each district health authority; and in each case, how many are based in hospitals, and how many in the community.

Mr. Newton: Such information as is available is shown in the table. It is not possible to identify staff as being specifically based in hospitals or in the community. Figures for September 1985 are the latest available to this level of detail.

Community Psychiatric Nursing staff (MI) 30 September 1985

	Whole time equivalent
Northern RHA	121
Hartlepool	8
North Tees	3
South Tees	10
East Cumbria	6
South Cumbria	6
West Cumbria	0
Darlington	11
Durham	10
North West Durham	3
South West Durham	11
Northumberland	19
Gateshead	1
Newcastle Upon Tyne	18
North Tyneside	4
South Tyneside	0
Sunderland	11
Yorkshire RHA	167
Hull	2
East Yorkshire	28
Grimsby	5
Scunthorpe	8
Northallerton	11
York	14
Scarborough	7
Harrogate	0
Bradford	7
Airedale	18
Calderdale	3
Huddersfield	11
Dewsbury	3
Leeds Western	22
Leeds Eastern	10
Wakefield	10
Pontefract	8
Trent RHA	215
North Derbyshire	19
South Derbyshire	35
Leicestershire	24
North Lincolnshire	25
South Lincolnshire	15
Bassetlaw	3
Central Notts	9
Nottingham	36
Barnsley	7
Doncaster	8
Rotherham	12
Sheffield	22
East Anglian RHA	101
Cambridge	11
Peterborough	12

	Whole time equivalent
West Suffolk	6
East Suffolk	17
Norwich	20
Great Yarmouth	13
West Norfolk and Wisbech	10
Huntingdon	12
North West Thames RHA	163
North Bedfordshire	7
South Bedfordshire	10
North Hertfordshire	2
East Hertfordshire	8
North West Hertfordshire	8
South West Hertfordshire	4
Barnet	20
Harrow	12
Hillingdon	7
Hounslow and Spelthorne	10
Ealing	28
Brent	12
Paddington	10
Riverside	25
North East Thames RHA	140
Basildon and Thurrock	12
Mid Essex	12
North East Essex	17
West Essex	11
Southend	4
Barking, Havering	14
Hampstead	18
Bloomsbury	14
Islington	7
City and Hackney	8
Newham	9
Tower Hamlets	4
Enfield	5
Haringey	2
Redbridge	1
Waltham Forest	3
South East Thames RHA	163
Brighton	4
Eastbourne	17
Hastings	19
South East Kent	29
Canterbury and Thanet	0
Dartford and Gravesham	1
Maidstone	12
Medway	16
Tunbridge Wells	10
Bexley	11
Greenwich	7
Bromley	2
West Lambeth	15
Camberwell	6
Lewis. and North Southwark	15
South West Thames RHA	207
North West Surrey	14
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	9
South West Surrey	6
Mid Surrey	23
East Surrey	14
Chichester	26
Mid Downs	23
Worthing	10
Croydon	11
Kingston & Esher	16
Richmond, Twickenham	11
Wandsworth	30
Merton and Sutton	15
Wessex RHA	166
East Dorset	33
West Dorset	16
Portsmouth	24
S. West Hampshire	19
Winchester	16
Basingstoke	9
Salisbury	10
Swindon	10
Bath	26
Isle of Wight	3
Oxford RHA	114
East Berkshire	22
West Berkshire	13
Aylesbury	18
Wycombe	16
Milton Keynes	3
Kettering	15
Northampton	14
Oxfordshire	13
South Western RHA	143
Bristol and Weston	19
Frenchay	9
Southmead	14
Cornwall	18
Exeter	25
North Devon	10
Plymouth	6
Torbay	11
Cheltenham	0
Gloucester	18
Somerset	14
West Midlands RHA	239
Bromsgrove and Redd.	10
Hereford	10
Kidderminster	5
Worcester	13
Salop	28
Mid Staffordshire	18
North Staffordshire	21
S.E. Staffordshire	9
Rugby	0
North Warwickshire	4
South Warwickshire	20
Central Birmingham	3
East Birmingham	8
North Birmingham	10
South Birmingham	18
West Birmingham	6
Coventry	17
Dudley	9
Sandwell	10
Solihull	13
Walsall	0
Wolverhampton	7
Mersey RHA	148
Chester	12
Crewe	13
Halton	10
Macclesfield	7
Warrington	22
Liverpool	26
St. Helens and Knowsley	30
Southport and Formby	12
South Sefton	3
Wirral	14
North Western RHA	220
Lancaster	14
Blackpool, Wyre	15
Preston	26
Blackburn, Hyndburn	15
Burnley, Pendle	0
West Lancashire	6
Chorley and S. Ribble	10

	Whole time equivalent
Bolton	10
Bury	7
North Manchester	14
Central Manchester	9
South Manchester	15
Oldham	7
Rochdale	0
Salford	24
Stockport	13
Tameside and Glossop	8
Trafford	14
Wigan	14

Source: DHSS Annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

Notes

(1) These figures include all registered and enrolled nurses and unqualified nursing staff employed in the community psychiatric service. It is not possible to provide separate information for those nurses who have undertaken the post-basic community psychiatric nursing course.

(2) Because the identification of these staff depends on accurate recording of location and occupation details on district health authority payrolls it is possible that some staff engaged on the duties in question are not actually recorded as working on those duties. Some community staff are hospital based and are recorded as hospital staff. Also some may be on the payroll of one district but working in another.

(3) Includes staff of London post-graduate special health authorities.

(4) All figures have been rounded to nearest one whole-time equivalent.

Occupational Pensioners

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his most recent estimates of the number of occupational pensioners who both pay income tax and are in receipt of housing benefit.

Mr. Major: The latest estimate, based on information from the family expenditure survey 1985, is that the number of tax units (single people or married couples) in receipt of an occupational pension, paying income tax and in receipt of housing benefit is 1 million.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people claimed supplementary benefit in the Don Valley constituency in 1986-87; what percentage change that represents from 1985-86; and what was the percentage change in (i) staff handling supplementary benefit and (ii) all staff at his Department's local offices for the same period.

Mr. Lyell: Don Valley constituency is covered by four of the Department's local offices, Doncaster East, Doncaster West, Wath on Dearne and Mexborough. The latter is a national insurance office and does not deal with supplementary benefit. The boundaries of the offices are not conterminous with those of the constituency.

The latest available information on claims relates to 10 March 1987. The comparison has therefore been based on the weekly average number of claims received in the two periods.

	Doncaster East	Doncaster West	Wath on Dearne
1985-86			
Numbers of claims (52 weeks)	13,703	17,650	9,393
Weekly average	264	339	181
1986-87 (to 10 March 1987)			
Number of claims (48 weeks)	*12,321*	*14,562*	*8,410*
Weekly average	*257*	*303*	*175*
Percentage change in the weekly average	*−3*	*−11*	*−3*

The percentage changes in staffing between 1985-86 and 1986-87 are:

	All Staff	Supplementary Benefit Staff
Doncaster East	+ 4 per cent.	+ 4 per cent.
Doncaster West	+ 6 per cent.	+ 10 per cent.
Wath on Dearne	+ 6 per cent.	+ 6 per cent.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of people in *(a)* the north-west, *(b)* Greater Manchester county, *(c)* Oldham, *(d)* Rochdale and *(e)* for each of his Department's offices covering Littleborough and Saddleworth constituency, currently in receipt of supplementary benefit; how many of the claimants are retirement pensioners; how many are unemployed persons; and what were the corresponding figures for May 1979.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 March 1987, *c. 675-76*]: Information is not available precisely in the form requested. The available information for parts *(a)* to *(d)* is as follows:

Numbers in receipt of supplementary benefit (thousands)

	Total	Over pension age	[5]Unemployed
(a) DHSS North-West Region[1]			
May 1979	418	242	93
February 1986[2]	735	230	336
(b) Greater Manchester County[3]			
1981[4]	212	102	72
1985[2]	278	97	118
(c) Oldham Metropolitan Borough[3]			
1981[4]	15	9	4
1985[2]	21	8	9
(d) Rochdale Metropolitan Borough[3]			
1981[4]	17	8	6
1985[2]	21	7	9

[1] The figures for May 1979 are in respect of the Department's two former regions, North-West (Manchester) and North-West (Merseyside) which were subsequently merged, together with 5 offices from the Northern Region, to form the present North-West Region.

[2] Latest date for which the information is available.

[3] Because the boundaries of Greater Manchester county and Oldham and Rochdale metropolitan boroughs are not conterminous with those of the Department's local offices, information in respect of those areas is available only as average figures for each year.

[4] Earliest date for which the information is available.

[5] The number of unemployed people in the standard north-west

region (Department of Employment) which is not conterminous with the DHSS region increased from 167,300 in May 1979 to 430,900 in February 1986.

Source: Quarterly statistical inquiries.

The available information for part *(e)* is as follows:

Numbers of cases in action (thousand)

	Total	*Over pension age*	*Unemployed*
(e) Oldham local office[1]			
May 1979	10	7	2
February 1987[2]	18	6	6
Rochdale local office			
May 1979	7	4	1
February 1987[2]	13	4	5

[1] The parliamentary constituency of Littleborough and Saddleworth is covered by the Department's local offices at Oldham and Rochdale, but their boundaries are not conterminous with the boundary of the constituency. The figures do not relate to the number of persons in receipt of benefit and are not compatible with those provided for *(a)* to *(d)*.

[2] Latest date for which the information is available.

Source: 100 per cent. count of all cases in action in the local offices.

Orthotic Services

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has received from the director of the disabilities study unit concerning the future of orthotic services; what reply is being sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The director of the disabilities study unit has written to me about "A Future for the Orthotic Services", the report of a working party set up by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation. I have told the director that we are anxious to ensure that the orthotic service should cater for patient needs in a cost effective way which would at the same time provide a good standard of service for patients. We are considering how best to take this forward.

Amnesia

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will encourage local authority social service departments to provide funds for the rehabilitation of sufferers from severe amnesia;

(2) whether any residential accommodation is provided by the National Health Service for those suffering from severe amnesia;

(3) if he will request the National Health Service regions to assess the adequacy of their provision for those suffering from severe amnesia; and if he will encourage the establishment of regional centres;

(4) what information he has on *(a)* the number of cases of severe amnesia that occur annually and *(b)* the National Health Service provision for such cases.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Centre, Moulsecoombe

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to persuade the South East regional health authority that the proposed start date for the health centre on the Moulsecoombe estate should be brought forward from 1992 in line with its agreed priority for the area.

Mrs. Currie: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people currently make national insurance contributions.

Mr. Major: The most recent available information is that 23,603,000 people in the United Kingdom paid at least one national insurance contribution during 1984-85.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the percentage increase in the state retirement pension in each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 27 February at columns *444-47*.

AIDS

Mr. Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what further steps he is taking to combat the spread of AIDS through drug misuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The use of contaminated needles and syringes by drug misusers is a major way in which the AIDS virus is spread. We are therefore taking a range of measures designed both to reinforce our anti-drugs strategy and to curb the spread of AIDS amongst drug misusers and from them into the general population.

First, we are continuing to give priority to our strategy for the prevention of drug misuse. The dangers of injecting will be highlighted in the next phase of our AIDS and drugs publicity campaigns.

Second, we are providing an extra £1 million in 1987-88 to help drug misuse services play a growing role in the fight against AIDS. This means central Government will be providing over £6·2 million specifically for drug misuse services during the coming year to add to the contributions health authorities are already making from their own budgets and the £17·5 million which has been allocated to over 180 local projects over six years. The new money is being allocated to the health regions in proportion to their population in the 15 to 34 years age group, which is considered to be at greatest risk of misusing drugs.

Third, we are establishing a number of special schemes where drug misusers who have not yet stopped injecting will be able both to receive counselling and exchange used and possibly infected needles and syringes for clean equipment. We have consulted the interested professional and other bodies nationally and locally about these schemes and our proposals have received a wide measure of support. The new schemes will be in the following areas:

Bristol
Carlisle
Dagenham
Hereford
Kingston-upon-Thames
Liverpool
London (3 schemes at St. George's Hospital, Tooting; St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington; and University College Hospital)
Peterborough
Portsmouth
Sheffield

In some cases we will be building on existing exchange arrangements; in others these will be completely new schemes. All the schemes will be closely monitored to help assess their effect on the behaviour of drug misusers and the part this might play in combatting the spread of infection.

These measures reflect the priority which the Government attach both to tackling drug misuse and to protecting the population as a whole from the threat of AIDS.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the weekly amounts of standard housing benefit currently payable (assuming a grant-aided period of 38 weeks) to a single grant-aided student without dependants or disability, aged under 25, studying on an advanced course at a London college and living in privately rented accommodation by way of (i) rent allowance for eligible rents of £18, £20, £22, £24, £26, £28 and £30 per week; and (ii) rate rebate (assuming the student's eligible rent to exceed £17·70 per week) for eligible rates of £2·50, £3, £4 and £5 per week; and what will be the weekly amounts of benefit payable to the same student in the same circumstances under the housing benefit scheme to be introduced under the Social Security Act 1986 on the basis that the tapers for rent allowance and rate rebate will be 60 per cent. and 20 per cent., respectively, that 20 per cent. of rates will be ineligible for benefit and upon the assumption that the basic level of income support for a claimant aged under 25 will be £25 per week; and if he will present the above information in tabulated form so as to show losses or gains as between comparable claims under the present and intended new systems.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 March 1987, c. *237-38*]: The information requested using the assumptions specified and the proposed structure of the reformed housing benefit scheme is shown in the tables.

Under the current scheme local authorities compare student income with housing benefit needs allowances and apply a complicated structure of tapers. The needs allowances do not fully reflect the structure of supplementary benefit rates contributing to the inequities and complications of the present arrangements

The basis of the calculations in the reformed structure is a comparison between the student's grant income, for the 38-week academic year, and the assumed income support rate for single people aged 18 to 24. The weekly income of a student in London on the basis of the standard grant payable during the 1986-87 academic year is £33·72 after taking account of the amount allowed in the grant for expenses for accommodation, books and travel. The decreases in student entitlement to housing benefit, shown in the tables, arise from the application of the rent and rate tapers specified in the question to the amount by which this income exceeds the assumed income support rate of £25 per week. However, the precise level of benefit payable under the reformed scheme will vary depending on the detailed regulations, which have yet to be made, and the rates of benefit which will not be decided until the autumn. The whole system of student support, including benefits, is being looked at in the present review. We are considering how to compensate students in order to achieve our aim of removing them from the benefit system.

Rent level	*Current scheme entitlement*	*New scheme entitlement*[1]	*Loss*
£	£	£	£
A. Rent allowances			
18·00	0·30	nil	0·30
20·00	2·30	nil	2·30
22·00	4·25	nil	4·25
24·00	5·45	1·07	4·38
26·00	6·65	3·07	3·58
28·00	7·85	5·07	2·78
30·00	9·05	7·07	1·98
Rate level			
B. Rate rebates			
2·50	2·04	nil	2·04
3·00	2·34	0·66	1·68
4·00	2·94	1·46	1·48
5·00	3·54	2·26	1·28

[1] Based on illustrative assumptions.

Notes:

(1) Both current and new scheme figures have been calculated on the basis of the standard grant of £2,246 per annum which is payable during the 1986-87 academic year to a London student living away from home. Of this grant, £17·70 a week is deducted from the student's rent in assessing housing benefit.

(2) For the new scheme calculations, £292 of the grant has been disregarded to reflect disregards on travel costs and books and equipment which do not apply at present.

(3) For the new scheme a minimum payment of 50p has been assumed.

(4) Other illustrative assumptions used are those quoted in the question.

Income Support

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is in a position to make a statement about the nature of rate assessment forms for people on income support.

Mr. Lyell [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c.*80*]: People on income support will complete the same housing benefit claim form whether they wish to be assessed for entitlement to a rate rebate, rent rebate, or rent allowance. Arrangements will be made to enable those claiming income support and housing benefit simultaneously to receive and return forms together, through the local offices of this Department. The precise details of the arrangements and of the content and design of the housing benefit form are under discussion with the local authority associations. Entitlement to housing benefit in all cases will be determined by local authorities which administer the housing benefit scheme and householders on income support will qualify for maximum housing benefit. Future alignment of income-related benefits means that authorities will not need to apply the common income test because local offices of this Department will have already done so in establishing entitlement to income support.

Cold Weather Payments

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of administering cold weather payments for the period January to March 1987, assuming maximum take-up; and how much was spent on publicising these payments.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *412*]: The full cost of advertising and adminstering the

exceptionally cold weather scheme in the current year will be assessed at the end of the winter period. However, total advertising costs for January 1987 were about £670,000.

Additional manpower in the form of 300 overtime man-years was allocated to local offices to help process cold weather claims at a cost of some £4 million. Extra travel and subsistence in connection with overtime working and increased postage costs were also incurred.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cold weather payments have been made in 1987, in each week for which information is available, to claimants in each of the categories *(a)* over 65 years *(b)* chronically sick or disabled and *(c)* with a child under the age of two years.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *412*]: Information is not available in the form requested. However, up to 24 February 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, approximately 1·9 million exceptionally cold weather £5 payments were made at a cost of £9·5 million.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 3 April 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Illegal Immigrants

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of persons proceeded against as illegal immigrants in each 12 months period ending in September, in each year from 1980 to 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Waddington: Information on persons dealt with as illegal entrants is published quarterly in the Home Office statistical bulletins on the control of immigration statistics. Figures for the periods requested are given in the following table.

Persons against whom action was commenced as illegal entrants

	Number of persons
12 months ending September—	
1980	1,509
1981	[1]1,120
1982	[1]1,110
1983	986
1984	903
1985	1,083

([1]) Rounded to the nearest 10 as precise figures are not available for the quarters of 1981.

Traffic Regulation

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps, following the observation of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary in his report for 1985, to ensure that the allocation of resources for traffic regulation enforcement takes proper account of the potential and actual consequences of motor vehicles as agencies of death and injury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: HM's inspectors of constabulary already take account of these considerations in the course of their inspections and we are satisfied that chief officers fully appreciate the importance of effective enforcement as a contribution to road safety.

New Hall Prison, Wakefield

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the proposed future use of New Hall prison, Middlestown, Wakefield, and on the implications for the communities in Overton and Middlestown, Wakefield.

Mr. Mellor: Work is in progress to convert the former detention centre at New Hall into a closed prison for females. As a detention centre New Hall functioned as a closed establishment for male young offenders in the 17 to 20-year-old group. We do not see the change of use of New Hall as having any implications for the communities in Overton and Middlestown. If the right hon. Member has any specific concerns which he would like to bring to our notice, I will be pleased to answer them.

Crime (Clear-up Rate)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the percentage of recorded offences cleared up by the police in Wales in 1986, according to offence groups.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

Clear-up rates [1] for notifiable offences recorded by the police, 1986, by offence group

Wales	*Percentages*
Violence against the person	83
Sexual offences	86
Robbery	31
Theft and handling stolen goods	56
Fraud and Forgery	82
Criminal Damage [2]	30
Other notifiable offences	96
Total notifiable offences [2]	40

[1] The proportion of notifiable offences cleared up by the police expressed as a percentage of those recorded.
[2] Excluding offences of 'other criminal damage' value £20 and under.

Police (Establishment)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the authorised establishment and strength of the police force in Wales in 1986, according to police force areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information as on 31 December 1986 is as follows:

Police force	*Authorised Police Establishment*	*Police strength*	*Civilian strength*[1]	*Total police and civilian manpower*[1]
Dyfed-Powys	934	929	193	1,122
Gwent	978	973	236	1,209
North Wales	1,316	1,268	382	1,650
South Wales	3,109	3,099	956	4,055

Note:
[1] Excluding traffic wardens and cadets
Including part-time civilian staff on a two for one basis.

Mr. Azad Akhtar

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when Azad Akhtar—reference: TN3/IS/334/3/87—arrived in the United Kingdom; by which British post his visitor's visa was issued; when a telex was sent to the post seeking information about Mr. Akhtar; when the reply to that telex was received; and when a decision was taken on Mr. Akhtar's application to enter the United Kingdom;

(2) where Mr. Azad Akhtar has been detained pending a decision on his application to enter the United Kingdom; if he has been informed as to his eligibility to apply for release on bail; and when he was advised of his rights to appeal against any decision to refuse him entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Mr. Azad Akhtar arrived on 26 March with a visitor's visa issued in Bahrain. Telex inquiries were sent to the post on 27 and 31 March, and replies were received on 30 March and 1 April. He was detained pending further examination in the detention accommodation at Harmondsworth, and was informed as to his eligibility to apply for release on bail. He was refused leave to enter on 2 April following further examination and was then given notice of his right of appeal against that decision. He has been granted temporary admission pending his decision on whether or not he wishes to appeal.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of the latest crime statistics according to the ethnic origins of the offenders.

Mr. Mellor: For many offences recorded by the police the offender is not known. Neither is information on ethnic origin regularly collected centrally for known offenders, apart from those received into prison department establishments. Information available on the ethnic appearance of offenders in the Metropolitan police district between 1977 and 1983 was published in a Home Office statistical bulletin issue 22/84, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Citizenship

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to make any changes in citizenship fee levels for 1987-88.

Mr. Hurd: I am pleased to say that citizenship fees for 1987-88 will be held at their present levels. This is a tribute to the staff who, by bringing about improvements in the cost effectiveness of the service, have enabled us to plan on the basis that over the next financial year fees should continue to cover the cost of issuing certificates. I have placed in the Library a copy of the nationality fees budget income and expenditure account for the year ending 31 March 1988.

PRIME MINISTER

Moscow (Visit)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister how many civil servants accompanied her to Moscow; from which Departments they came; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Fifteen civil servants, of whom nine were secretarial and support staff, accompanied me and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to Moscow. Nine were from No. 10, five from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and one from the Central Office of Information.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total capital expenditure over the past five years on developing the coal mining industry; and what proportion of this has taken place in the coalfields of Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Capital expenditure in the coal industry over the past five years has totalled almost £3·3 billion, of which £175 million (at outturn prices) has been invested in Wales.

Mersey Barrage

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he expects the feasibility study into the proposed Mersey barrage to be completed on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Mersey Barrage Company is making good progress in its work and expects that the feasibility study will be completed on time by the end of 1987.

Welsh Anthracite

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the total production by the National Coal Board of Welsh anthracite in 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively; and what is the anticipated production in 1987;

(2) what tonnages of Welsh anthracite were allocated for disposal to each Nationl Coal Board region in 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 respectively;

(3) What tonnage of Welsh anthracite was shipped to Northern Ireland in 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively; and what is proposed to be shipped in 1987;

(4) what tonnage of Welsh anthracite was exported in 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively; and what exports are planned for 1987.

Mr. David Hunt [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 March 1987, c. *648*]: Total production by British Coal of Welsh anthacite since 1983-84 is as follows:

1983-84 — 1,858·8 thousand tonnes
1984-85 — 1,044·1 thousand tonnes
1985-86 — 2,288·2 thousand tonnes

Figures for 1986-87 and projections for 1987-88 are not available.

Information on disposals by British Coal of Welsh anthracite since 1983-84 is as follows:

Thousand tonnes

Region	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86
Scottish	27·2	2·0	39·3
Northern	5·6	1·4	8·9
Yorkshire	29·3	7·3	48·6
Western	75·3	8·3	88·9
Midlands	85·9	7·2	98·6
South Wales	1,022·5	433·2	724·9
West of England	90·3	18·3	102·9
London and South	206·9	14·1	224·7
Total	1,543·0	491·8	1,336·8
Northern Ireland	172·7	7·3	204·6
Exports	503·8	18·2	321·9

Figures for 1986-87 and projections for 1987-88 are not available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Departmental Contracts

Mr. Wheeler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice is given to contracting Departments to ensure that they do not award contracts involving unlimited liability which cannot be covered on the insurance market.

Mr. Brooke: None. As in the private sector, a contractor may be held responsible without limit for costs arising from any default which would otherwise fall on the public purse as a result of his action. This is reflected in the standard conditions used in departmental contracts. In certain cases he may be required to carry specified levels of insurance cover. Otherwise it is a matter for him to decide what insurance he needs and can obtain.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of investment, capital consumption and net investment each year in manufacturing industry since 1970.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

VAT

Dr. Hampson asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from The Library Asssociation concerning the continuation of zero rating on books and other literature after the harmonisation of value added tax arrangements within the European Community; and what response he has made.

Mr. Brooke: The chief executive of the Library Association wrote to my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts on 9 February. His letter was passed to me for reply. In my letter of 12 March I informed the association that the European Commission has not yet made detailed proposals for the approximation of VAT rates but that, when it does, the proposals will require unanimous agreement. Questions concerning the VAT treatment of books and other literature will therefore remain wholly a matter for national decision and subject to full parliamentary consideration.

South Africa (Military Equipment)

Mr. Cabora asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give details of all cases in which prosecutions of Customs compounding have taken place in relation to the supply of arms and related material to South Africa since the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 418, 1977;

(2) what action has been taken following the discovery by Her Majesty's Customs officials on 27 February 1986, that cargoes on board the MS St Maguire at Felixstowe described as agricultural machinery bound for a company known as M & I Engineers Pty, Pretoria, South Africa, were in fact components of 140 mm howitzers being exported in breach of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what action will be taken by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to investigate allegations that the MV Lady Anita exported 140 howitzers from Felixstowe on 28 November 1984 which were destined for South Africa in breach of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Excise Duties

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the estimated receipts in 1986-87 and the forecast receipts in 1987-88 from excise duties on spirits, beer, wine, made wine, cider and perry, respectively; and if he will explain any differences or special factors.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Clement Shaw Ltd.

Mr. Cabora asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of the results of the investigation into Clement Shaw Ltd. in relation to possible breaches of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Company Cars

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* his best estimate of the cost of new cars purchased by companies in 1986-87 for their own use, including by their directors and employees, or for the use of other business under lease or contract hire.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that estimates of this nature are not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* representative figures showing the current annual cost to companies of providing new cars for the use of directors and higher-paid employees where the beneficiary is entitled to choose his own car within a specified price, but where (i) the car is acquired under a straightfoward lease and (ii) the whole cost of putting the car on the road and maintaining it is carried by the supplier under a term-mileage contract; and if he will provide figures for a representative price range of cars within each category of scale charge, and for a Roll-Royce.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that the information is not available.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been disbursed by the Science and Engineering Research Council teaching in companies scheme in each year since the scheme was introduced; how much has been disbursed to *(a)* individuals and *(b)* companies in Yorkshire and Humberside in each year since this scheme was introduced; how much is to be disbursed to individuals and companies in Yorkshire and Humberside under the council's latest allocation; what representations about this allocation he has received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The following table shows the information requested in the first part of the question:

Amount disbursed by SERC on teaching company scheme

£K

Financial Year	*Net Expenditure*[3]
1976-77	24·5
1977-78	81·5
1978-79	177·5
1979-80	231·5
1980-81	606·0
1981-82	663·5
1982-83	1,006·0
1983-84	1,600·0
1984-85	2,027·0
1985-86	2,452·5
1986-87	[1]2,760·0
1987-88	[2] 3,585·0

[1] Provisional outturn
[2] Estimates
[3] The teaching company scheme is jointly funded. Up to 1984-85, it was funded on a 50-50 basis by the SERC and the Department of Trade and Industry. Since 1985-86, the Economic and Social Research Council has contributed an additional £80,000 a year matched by the DTI. The Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development joined the scheme in 1986-87 when it contributed £20,000. Its estimated contribution in 1987-88 is £150,000.

Because of the way in which TCS records are held, disproportionate cost would be involved in extracting figures for a particular region such as Yorkshire and Humberside. No representations about regional allocations have been received.

TCS grants are made to education institutes and not to individuals or companies.

Senile Dementia

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what conclusions have been drawn by the Medical Research Council's study of the possible relationship between aluminium saucepans, aluminium rich foods and senile dementia.

Mr. Walden: I understand the MRC is studying the possible relationship between aluminium in drinking water and the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease. No conclusions can be drawn until this study is complete in 1988.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average annual current expenditure allocated by the University Grants Committee *(a)* on arts students and *(b)* on engineering students in a university in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: The estimated average net recurrent expenditure by universities per student in the 1984-85 academic year was £3,930 for arts subjects and £6,070 for engineering subjects. The UGC's recurrent grant is, however, allocated on a different basis, as described in its circular letters 22/85 and 6/87, copies of which are in the Library.

Universities and Polytechnics

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total expenditure on capital equipment in *(a)* universities and *(b)* polytechnics in the last year for which figures are available; what were the corresponding numbers of full-time equivalent students; and what were the corresponding per capita allocations on equipment in the two types of institution.

Mr. Walden: The following table relates to expenditure on equipment in the financial year 1984-85 by universities and by local authorities in respect of polytechnics. Allocations of funding for equipment are not made on a per capita basis in either sector.

	Expenditure (£m)	*Student Numbers*[1] (000s)	*Expenditure per FTE student* (£)
Universities[2]	86·7	303·8	285
Polytechnics[3]	18·7	170·8	109

[1] Full-time equivalent (FTE), academic year 1984-85
[2] Great Britain
[3] England

Broadacres School, Hixon

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future of Broadacres school, Hixon, Staffordshire, in the light of the representations he has received from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire.

Mr. Dunn: Staffordshire LEA's proposals to reorganise educational provision in Stafford and the surrounding area, including Hixon, are currently before my right hon. Friend and a decision will be announced soon which will take into account all representations received.

Sixth Forms

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the retention of sixth forms in schools, with particular reference to sixth forms with substantial numbers and a high proportion of young people undertaking two-year courses leading to examinations at the advanced general certificate of education level.

Mr. Dunn: Under the Education Act 1980 local education authorities are free to propose any pattern of school, including sixth form, organisation they may choose. My right hon. Friend considers such proposals on their merits: in doing so he takes account amongst other things of numbers, the range and diversity of the curriculum and the quality of examination results.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a table showing for each year from 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive *(a)* the total of capital allocations made to local education authorities in Greater London, *(b)* the total of capital expenditure bids submitted by local education authorities in Greater London and *(c)* the figure *(a)* expressed as a percentage of the figure *(b)*; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for each year from 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive *(a)* the total of capital allocations made to metropolitan district education authorities outside Greater London, *(b)* the total of capital expenditure bids submitted by metropolitan district education authorities outside Greater London and *(c)* the figure *(a)* expressed as a percentage of the figure *(b)*; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will publish a table showing for each year from 1982-83 to 1985-86 inclusive *(a)* the total of capital allocations made to non-metropolitan county education authorities, *(b)* the total of capital expenditure bids submitted by non-metropolitan county education authorities and *(c)* the figure *(a)* expressed as a percentage of the figure *(b)*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn *[pursuant to his replies, 12 March 1987, c. 260-61]*: The information requested for the years 1982-83 to 1985-86 for local education authorities within Greater London, metropolitan districts and non-metropolitan authorities as set out in the table.

	Authorities in Greater London	*Metropolitan district authorities*	*Non-Metropolitan authorities*	*Totals*
1982-83				
Allocation (£000's)	36,618	74,657	181,886	293,361
LEA's plans (000's)	(1)	(1)	(1)	
Allocation as a percentage of plans	—	—	—	
1983-84				
Allocation (£000's)	33,396	76,730	184,534	294,660
LEA's plans (£000's)	(1)	(1)	(1)	
Allocation as a percentage of plans	—	—	—	
1984-85				
Allocation (£000's)	33,166	77,084	189,853	300,103
LEA's plans (£000's)	70,994	148,507	324,094	543,595
Allocations as a percentage of plans	47	52	59	55
1985-86				
Allocations (£000's)	39,998	75,507	189,838	305,643
LEA's plans (£000's)	90,404	159,188	339,340	588,932
Allocation as a percentage of plans	44	48	56	52

Notes:
1. Cash plans were not requested in these years.
2. The allocations in respect of prescribed expenditure shown are those announced before the start of the financial year and do not include additional allocations made later to some authorities.

WALES

Cull Cows

Mr. Best asked asked the Secretary of State for Wales if extra funds will be made available to farmers to overcome the problems of extra cull cows coming on to the market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Commission has the necessary powers to introduce extra support through the management committee if there is undue weakness in the beef market as a result of heavy cow cullings. The budgetary and expenditure forecasts include appropriate provisions for this.

ENVIRONMENT

Ordnance Survey

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the Ordnance Survey to depict on its maps at 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale all open land to which the public has a right of access.

Mr. Waldegrave: Ordnance Survey already depicts information on open land where this is available in a suitable form.

Frontier Regions (Conference)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if consideration was given to representation at the fourth European conference of frontier regions in the light of invitations to both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: This conference of frontier regions took place in Spain on 23-25 March. Officials from the 21 member states of the Council of Europe with an interest were invited; its aim was to review the problems facing transfrontier co-operation in Europe, to discuss achievements and shortcomings, and to examine prospects for the year 2000. The United Kingdom decided on this occasion not to be represented because as an island the transfrontier problems being discussed were of little relevance. I understand that the Republic of Ireland similarly sent no representatives.

Anti-fouling Products

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to compensate, or consider compensation claims from, yacht chandlers or other retailers having stock of TBT-based anti-fouling agents purchased before the implementation of the ban on such products.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have no such plans.

Pest Control

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints he has received from within London with regard to nuisance caused by urban pests such as bees, foxes, wasps, cockroaches; and how many representations he has so far received, and from whom, in regard to the relevant consultation paper.

Mr. Waldegrave: A few local authorities, including some in London, have in the past suggested that their current powers were insufficinet to control various species which can cause nuisance in urban areas. We have therefore consulted on possible amendments to the Public Health Acts 1936 and 1961. Of some 290 responses to the Department's consultation document recieved up to 31 March, some 200, including 180 from beekeepers or organisations representing beekeepers, have commented on these particular proposals. As was made clear in the consultation document itself, we will in due course be placing in the Library of the House copies of all responses where the authors have agreed to this; other responses will be included in any numerical analysis of views recieved.

Development

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the relationship between his new planning circular, and circular 15/84.

Mr. Waldegrave: The draft circular on development involving agricultural land and circular 15/84 are intended to be consistent with each other. The new circular and circular 15/84, as with all circulars containing planning policy, would need to be taken into account in each particular case to the extent that each is material to the decision.

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available in the Vote Office copies of his draft circular "Development Involving Agricultural Land."

Mr. Waldegrave: Copies of the draft circular have been available in the Vote Office since February.

Sports Grounds (Safety)

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what alterations to the November 1985 Building Regulations have been made following the recommendations contained in paragraph 3.90 of the final report of Mr. Justice Popplewell into safety at sports grounds.

(2) what guidance has been issued to local authorities sporting bodies and other interested organisations regarding the criteria applied by the November 1985 Building Regulations to the construction of sports stands, including the materials which may be used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Out-of-town Retail Developments

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the out-of-town retail developments which are currently before his Department for consideration.

Mr. Tracey [*pursuant to his reply*, 2 April 1987]: The following out-of-town retail developments are currently before the Department as appeals or applications called in for determination by the Secretary of State. The list relates to proposals for development of 20,000 sq m or more outside established shopping centres at 31 March 1987.

Local planning authority	*Applicant/Appellant*	*Gross floor area (sq metres)*
Northern Region		
North Tyneside MBC	Tyne Tunnel Trading Estate Ltd.	35,394
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Leeds CC	Leeds University	27,870
Leeds CC	Moorleigh Development Ltd.	46,450
North West Region		
Bury MBC	North West Regional Health Authority	23,225
Macclesfield BC	Tesco/Marks and Spencer	23,000
Rochdale MBC	J & J Fox[3]	74,320
St. Helens MBC	Citygrove Developments Ltd[4]	30,416
	Pilkington[5] United Co-operative Society Ltd.	
Salford MBC	J & J Fox[3]	92,900
Stockport MBC	North West Regional Health Authority	23,220
	Spring Park Securities	74,320
Trafford MBC	Manchester Ship Canal Company	92,900
Trafford MBC	Prudential Assurance Co. Ltd/ Shell UK[1]	116,125
West Midlands Region		
Solihull MBC	B & Q (Ret.)) Ltd.	33,400
	Standard Life Assurance Co.	37,160
East Midlands Region		
Mansfield DC	Chico Land Ltd.	23,480
Blaby DC	Centre 21 (Pensview Properties)[6]	64,566
	W. J. Parker Ltd/Everards Ltd./ Tiger Brewery[1]	30,310
Eastern Region		
St. Albans City DC/Three Rivers DC	Town and City Properties (Developers) Ltd.	32,000
South Bedfordshire DC	BTR plc/Citygrove developments Ltd.	20,000
South Cambridgeshire DC	Cannock Developments Ltd.	27,870
Thurrock DC	Capital Counties plc/Lakeside trading[1]	296,800
South West Region		
Bristol CC	Bayliss[1]	46,450
	Prudential Assurance Co. Ltd.	46,450
East Devon DC	EBC	23,780
Exeter CC	M Baker Property Services Ltd. (and alternative scheme)	32,515
Teignbridge DC	Shearwater/Digby Hospital[6]	38,990
	Cameron Ball[3]	37,067

Local planning authority	Applicant/Appellant	Gross floor area (sq metres)
South East Region		
Spelthorne BC/ Windsor and Maidenhead RBC	A R C Properties Ltd.	81,500
LB of Brent	IKEA Ltd.	22,500
Tonbridge and Malling DC	ASDA	27,870

[1] Indicates case called-in for the Secretary of State's decision.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the most recently available information to show the total number of community programme projects and places by type of project and type of sponsor.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The total number of community programme projects and authorised places, by project and sponsor type, are as follows. Table 1 gives information about projects, and table 2 places as at 20 February 1987.

Table 1 Projects by Type and Sponsor (total)
Great Britain

	Total	Local authority	Local Education Authority	Voluntary organisation	Nationalised Industry	Private Sector	Health Authority	Government Department	Other
Total	13,144	5,763	8	154	34	270	120	42	28
Environmental Building and Landscaping	123	85	0	20	0	4	0	0	3
Home Insulation	88	49	1	27	0	3	0	0	2
Research and Surveys	328	95	1	2	0	32	1	0	1
Library	437	218	0	8	0	9	10	1	3
Youth Work	729	427	1	2	2	14	15	6	0
Voluntary Acts	30	11	1	7	0	0	0	1	1
Other Social Services	24	6	1	15	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural	97	29	2	37	0	5	1	0	2
Workshop	359	143	0	11	0	9	3	5	1
CP Agent Management	480	164	0	4	0	14	0	0	0
Environmental and Landscaping	908	374	1	9	3	29	8	2	3
Building and Construction	3,075	1,771	0	0	7	51	7	14	3
Archaeological Digs	1,488	634	0	4	4	46	8	1	1
Childrens Services	93	48	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Young Peoples Services	578	241	0	1	1	5	7	3	0
Services for the Elderly	1,169	433	0	1	1	13	7	8	2
Services for the Disabled	1,902	581	0	3	13	33	24	0	5
Centres for the Unemployed	1,109	370	0	3	3	3	29	0	1
	124	84	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1—continued

	Education institution	Ex-offenders organisations	Churches	Youth organisations	Old peoples groups	Disability groups	Ethnic groups	Environmental and conservation groups	Other voluntary organisations	Quasi-commercial body
Total	222	749	687	332	85	260	132	554	2,702	945
Environmental Building and Landscaping	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	3	0
Home insulation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0
Research and Surveys	0	63	12	1	1	0	0	8	94	19
Library	16	15	15	4	1	3	5	29	84	14
Youth work	50	4	19	3	1	3	1	25	127	25
Voluntary acts	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	4	0
Other social services	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural	2	0	3	2	0	5	0	0	4	4
Workshop	30	5	14	2	1	1	26	9	77	20
CP agent management	1	51	52	6	1	4	8	12	134	28
Environmental and Landscaping	5	96	47	16	6	14	13	47	179	54
Building and Construction	8	181	77	24	1	10	2	317	338	253
	8	110	122	39	4	5	13	44	286	132

	Education institution	Ex-offenders organisations	Churches	Youth organisations	Old peoples groups	Disability groups	Ethnic groups	Environmental and conservation groups	Other voluntary organisations	Quasi-commercial body
Archaeological digs	13	3	0	0	0	0	0	16	11	1
Childrens services	19	19	40	20	0	5	8	16	162	27
Young peoples services	44	33	72	142	1	6	22	18	305	59
Services for the elderly	12	121	163	61	64	6	28	7	550	229
Services for the disabled	14	22	56	6	3	197	3	4	315	76
Centres for the unemployed	0	3	2	3	0	0	3	0	25	4

Table 2—Number of places by project Type and Sponsor (total)
Great Britain

	Total	Local authority	Local Education Authority	Voluntary organisation	Nationalised Industry	Private Sector	Health Authority	Government Department	Other
Total	291,471	125,110	85	2,236	614	5,734	2,259	852	600
Environmental	2,266	1,654	0	379	0	28	0	0	38
Building and Landscaping	1,637	985	12	468	0	82	0	0	18
Home Insulation	6,591	1,765	17	35	0	640	24	0	9
Research and Surveys	4,687	2,107	0	57	0	95	137	28	28
Library	7,957	4,659	1	16	31	152	140	107	0
Youth Work	369	129	18	55	0	0	0	42	17
Voluntary Acts	200	34	21	125	0	0	0	0	0
Other Social Services	1,208	450	10	428	0	34	1	0	11
Cultural	6,479	2,117	0	203	0	159	197	142	47
Workshop	11,254	2,818	0	110	0	336	0	0	0
CP Agent Management	16,685	6,613	6	72	89	507	149	35	67
Environmental and Landscaping	85,122	49,704	0	0	134	1,006	123	250	99
Building and Construction	42,834	17,498	0	198	96	1,413	238	38	55
Archaeological Digs	2,077	1,033	0	0	0	0	0	24	0
Childrens Services	8,303	3,024	0	3	11	77	248	27	0
Young Peoples Services	18,944	6,502	0	12	2	216	161	159	25
Services for the Elderly	52,572	16,254	0	40	200	941	452	0	183
Services for the Disabled	20,597	6,834	0	35	51	48	389	0	3
Centres for the Unemployed	1,478	873	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2—continued

	Education institution	Ex-offenders organisations	Churches	Youth organisations	Old peoples groups	Disability groups	Ethnic groups	Environmental and conservation groups	Other voluntary organisations	Quasi-commercial body
Authorised places Total	3,319	19,356	17,195	6,293	2,478	5,222	3,578	10,850	58,421	26,479
Environmental	0	0	33	0	0	16	0	13	56	0
Building and Landscaping	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	35	0
Home insulation	0	1,225	197	11	22	0	0	204	1,993	449
Research and Surveys	194	176	128	46	7	57	98	387	943	160
Library	668	44	188	15	42	47	7	234	1,277	298
Youth work	0	0	0	41	0	0	0	0	33	0
Voluntary acts	0	0	12	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
Other social services	31	0	20	91	0	60	0	0	19	48
Cultural	475	84	272	56	11	11	639	205	1,489	349
Workshop	16	1,597	1,496	82	50	105	377	334	3,169	735
CP agent management	61	1,819	948	230	115	146	337	546	3,753	1,178
Environmental and Landscaping	199	6,521	2,267	432	43	341	20	6,568	8,751	8,227
Building and Construction	134	3,585	3,905	661	466	239	454	1,086	8,368	4,360

	Education institution	Ex-offenders organisations	Churches	Youth organisations	Old peoples groups	Disability groups	Ethnic groups	Environmental and conservation groups	Other voluntary organisations	Quasi-commercial body
Archaeological digs	334	49	0	0	0	0	0	418	187	32
Childrens services	222	321	799	277	0	106	127	226	2,215	590
Young peoples services	532	537	1,036	2,981	6	172	641	335	4,895	715
Services for the elderly	279	2,762	1,636	1,250	1,673	117	802	186	14,930	7,851
Services for the disabled	174	596	1,232	48	35	3,805	42	92	5,747	1,443
Centres for the unemployed	0	40	28	72	0	0	34	0	387	44

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the net jobs loss for *(a)* all employees, *(b)* employees in manufacturing and construction *(c)* employees in manufacturing, *(d)* employees in engineering and allied industries and *(e)* employees in metal manufacturing, and the percentage fall, from June 1979 to the latest date for which figures are available for (i) Greater London, (ii) Birmingham, (iii) Liverpool, (iv) Manchester, (v) Newcastle, (vi) Glasgow, (vii) Cardiff, (viii) Bristol, (ix) Coventry, (x) Leicester, (xi) Bradford, (xii) Edinburgh, (xiii) Dundee and (xiv) Swansea.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 March 1987, c.*241*]: I regret the information is not available as there was no employment census in 1979 or 1980. Between census dates information about employees in employment subdivided by industry is available only for those areas listed in table 1.5 of the *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library. Greater London was added to these areas in 1981.

DEFENCE

House of Commons (Ministers)

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for Sessions 1984-85, 1985-86 and for the current Session to date, the number of *(a)* ministerial statements, *(b)* private notice questions, *(c)* debates on Government motions, *(d)* debates on Opposition motions, *(e)* Bills passing all stages (other than Consolidated Fund Bill debates), *(f)* debates on the Adjournment (other than the half-hour Adjournment), *(g)* half-hour Adjournment debates, *(h)* debates on statutory instruments and *(i)* other debates including debates following proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill which required the attendance in the House of Ministers or officials in his Department.

Mr. Younger: The information requested is as follows:

	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87 to date
(a) Ministerial statements	6	4	6
(b) Private Notice Questions	2	3	—
(c) Debates on Government motions	1	1	—
(d) Debates on Opposition motions	—	1	2
(e) Bills passing all stages (other than Consolidated Fund Bill Debates)	1	[1]3	1
(f) Debates on the adjournment (other than the half-hour adjournment)	3	4	3
(g) Half-hour Adjournment debates	4	4	2
(h) Debates on Statutory Instruments	2	—	2
(i) Other debates including debates following proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill	1	1	1

[1]Includes one Private Members Bill.

Trident

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the costs and penalties involved in any cancellation of Trident; how these can be offset against savings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the event of cancellation the costs payable would reflect contractors' properly incurred liabilities at termination. (These costs should be less than the total amount committed, which currently stands at about £3 billion).

As Trident will provide the United Kingdom with much the most cost-effective minimum deterrent to succeed Polaris, the risks to our security involved in its cancellation would be very grave indeed.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from British industry and trade unions about the role of Trident within the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries about the role of Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Stanley: Britain's NATO partners have welcomed the contribution made to the Alliance's forces by the British nuclear deterrent and have consistently supported our efforts to maintain its effectiveness. The most recent collective expression of this support was contained in the communiqué issued following the October 1986 meeting of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group, a copy of which is in the Library. Subsequently, at his meeting with the Prime Minister at Camp David in November 1986, President Reagan confirmed his full support for the arrangements made to modernise Britain's independent nuclear deterrent with Trident.

Directorate General of Defence Quality Assurance

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the estimated cost of housing of the main units of the directorate general of defence quality assurance of Royal Arsenal unit in accordance with his Department's recommendations;

(2) when he expects to complete his appraisal of the possible location for the main units of the directorate general of defence quality assurance;

(3) if he will publish the evidence which led his Department to recommend the Royal Arsenal unit as the preferred location for the directorate general of defence quality assurance, together with the list of other locations now being considered.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 19 January 1987, at column *452*. The further appraisal of the future accommodation needs of the directorate general of defence quality assurance is still in progress.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Staff

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff accredited with diplomatic status work in the offices of the British high commission in *(a)* Australia, *(b)* India and *(c)* Canada.

Mr. Eggar: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff accredited with diplomatic status work in the United Kingdom offices of *(a)* the Australian high commission, *(b)* the Indian high commission and *(c)* the Canadian high commission.

Mr. Eggar: The Austrialian high commission has 42 diplomatic staff; the Indian high commission 66; and the Canadian high commission 63.

Hong Kong

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has had about the Hong Kong Public Order (Amendment) Ordnance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We have received a number of representations about this ordinance. In reply we have made clear that while this is primarily a matter for the Hong Kong Government, we support the action they have taken. The legislation passed by a large majority in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong on 11 March included the repeal of a number of stringent provisions of the control of publications ordinance that had been part of the laws of Hong Kong for many years, but which have not prevented the Hong Kong media from being among the most free and outspoken in Asia. In reviewing this legislation and deciding upon these repeals, the Hong Kong Government considered that in such a small and densely-populated place as Hong Kong, it was nevertheless necessary to retain some power to act against anyone publishing false news likely to cause alarm to the public or disturb public order. The provision is not, therefore, a new one, and the result of the legislation passed on 11 March represents a major liberalisation compared with the position before that date.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conclusions were reached in discussions he has had with other Commonwealth countries about the possible acceptance of further Vietnamese refugees into their respective countries who are presently resident in Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: We remain in close contact with other members of the Commonwealth about the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong. We are grateful for their increased intakes of refugees from Hong Kong in response to our decision in 1985 to accept some 420 more of them for settlement in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards the acceptance of further Vietnamese refugees, presently resident in Hong Kong, into Britain.

Mr. Renton: We are considering the question of possible further resettlement in the United Kingdom of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, and hope to make an announcement soon.

Visas

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the emergency procedures available at the immigration departments at United Kingdom diplomatic missions in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh for the issue of visitors' visas in cases of extreme urgency.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) on 9 December 1986 at column 122.

Arms Embargo

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions, and in relation to which cases, Her Majesty's Government have reported details of breaches of the United Nations mandatory arms embago of South Africa to the United Nations Security Council committee on the arms embargo established by resolution 421 of 1977.

Mr. Renton: There is no requirement to report such breaches to the United Nations Security Council committee on the arms embargo, but where the committee

has asked for information we have always endeavoured to meet its requests. For example, we kept the committee fully informed of the Coventry case in 1984-85.

Mr. Cabora asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has discussed with the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany plans for the manufacture of submarines supplied from the Federal Republic of Germany to South Africa in breach of the United Nations mandatory arms embargo; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: It is not our practice to take up with other Governments allegations of breaches of the arms embargo. In accordance with accepted procedures, the matter is currently the subject of correspondence between the chairman of the Security Council committee established under Security Council resolution 421 (1977) and the Federal German Government.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which members of the United Nations Security Council, other than the United Kingdom, expressed reservations or qualifications in relation to United Nations Security Council resolution 591 of 1986.

Mr. Renton: None expressed reservations or qualifications. In his statement following the adoption by consensus of Security Council resolution 591 the United States representative noted that the arms embargo was essentially directed at the South African military and police a point also made by the United Kingdom representative.

Mr. Caborn: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have reported to the United Nations Secretary-General on action taken to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 591 of 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No new action is necessary in the United Kingdom to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 591.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the qualifications expressed by Her Majesty's Government in relation to the United Nations Security Council resolution 591 of 1986.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom representative expressed British support for Security Council resolution 591 which we saw as a clarification of Security Council resolution 418. He noted that certain paragraphs should not be interpreted as restricting trade in items intended for non-military purposes, and placed the obligation with regard to military co-operation within the context of the Luxembourg and Nassau comminqués of September and October 1985. He also reiterated our view that peaceful means must be used to bring about an end to apartheid.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* the statement of the United Kingdom ambassador to the United Nations made following the vote adopting United Nations Security Council resolution 591 of 1986.

Mr. Renton: In view of its length, I am arranging for copies of the statement in question to be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

SCOTLAND

Fisheries Protection

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are being made for airborne fisheries patrols between the conclusion of the existing contract at the end of May and the commencement of the new arrangement at the beginning of July; and if he is satisfied that the new aircraft and radar will be ready for operation in July.

Mr. John MacKay: Between the conclusion of the present arrangements and the commencement of the new arrangements the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland will deploy the inshore surveillance aircraft to cover offshore fisheries and a chartered Piper Aztec will maintain surveillance over coastal fisheries. I am assured that the new aircraft and radar are on programme for operation in July.

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures showing, in comparable terms, the annual total cost of operating his Department's airborne fisheries patrols by RAF Nimrod, Dornier 228 with Benedix radar as operated under contract between September 1986 and May 1987 and Fokker F27-200 with Ferranti radar provided by his Department but operated and maintained under separate contracts as proposed for the future.

Mr. John MacKay: The best estimate that can be made of the costs which would have been incurred in operating the three types of aircraft with their different performance levels during the complete financial year 1986-87 are:

	£ million
Nimrod	2·4
Dornier 228	0·9
Fokker F27-200	1·2

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he is offering separate contracts for *(a)* operating inshore fisheries surveillance, *(b)* operating offshore fisheries surveillance and *(c)* maintaining his Department's fisheries surveillance aircraft and equipment; and if he has considered continuing any or all of those contracts.

Mr. John MacKay: The Department has had three years' experience in the operation of a charter aircraft and a further 2½ years' experience operating and maintaining a Government-owned aircraft for inshore surveillance but only seven months' experience in operating an aircraft, other than Nimrod, on offshore surveillance. It is considered prudent at present not to combine the various elements but to proceed on the basis of a separate contract for the operation and maintenance of the inshore aircraft and separate contracts for the operation and maintenance of the larger and more complex offshore aircraft. The award of a three-year operator/maintenance contract for the inshore aircraft, effective from September 1987, is imminent, and it is hoped that the operator and maintenance contractors for the offshore aircraft will be announced later this month.

National Heritage

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which organisations have had grant assistance approved for 1987-88 under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985; and what sum each will receive.

Mr. Rifkind: Grants available under the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 for the financial year ending 31 March 1988 are as follows:

	£
National Library of Scotland	5,132,000
National Museums of Scotland	5,017,000
National Galleries of Scotland	3,417,000
Scottish Museums Council	440,000
Royal Society of Edinburgh	273,000
Royal Scottish Geographical Society	3,000
Cultural Organisations formerly grant-aided under the Further Education (Scotland) Regulations 1959	
National Youth Orchestra of Scotland	23,000
Scottish Youth Theatre	39,500
Scottish Community Drama Association	24,000
Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association	5,000
Scottish Council for Dance	4,000
An Comunn Gaidhealach	35,000
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	40,000
Comunn na Gaidhlig	45,000
Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich	32,000

NORTHERN IRELAND

Car Parks

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many car parks are still run by the Northern Ireland Department of the Environment; and if he will state reasons in each case why they have not yet been privatised or handed over to district councils.

Mr. Needham: There are 302 car parks still run by the Department of the Environment (NI); 228 of these are currently free car parks. Charges are levied in the remaining 74, mainly by the pay and display system. The Department is engaged in a programme of extending pay and display charging and a significant increase in the extension of the charging system needs to take place before an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of privatisation of car parks can be undertaken.

At present there are no plans to hand over car parks to district councils. However, councils will have the opportunity to compete with other interests when offers are invited at a later stage for the privatisation of car parks.

Farmers

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the approximate number of Northern Ireland farmers and the value of monetary compensation amounts payments owed them in connection with cattle purchases in the Irish Republic; for how long these payments have been outstanding; what representations have been made to the Irish authorities; with what result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Green Currency Rates

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many differing green currency rates are operated throughout the entire European Economic Community.

Mr. Gummer: There are 40 green rates currently applying in the 12 member states of the European Community; six in France, five in the United Kingdom, four in Spain, two in Belgium and Luxembourg and three in all other member states.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the different green pound rates operative in various agricultural commodities and each individual rate for each type of cereals and other crops listed under cropping in the annual review of agriculture White Paper for *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* Northern Ireland and *(c)* the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Gummer: The green rates currently applying thoughout the United Kingdom and in Ireland are as follows:

	United Kingdom	*Ireland*
Pigmeat	0·652575	0·821639
Beef and veal	0·668197	
Sheepmeat	0·652575	0·817756
Other livestock products	0·635626	
All arable products	0·626994	0·782478

Rights of Way

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to monitor and ensure the compliance by farmers with the code of practice on ploughing and rights of way published jointly by his Ministry and the Countryside Commission in July 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Both the Countryside Commission and the Ramblers' Association are monitoring the effects of the ploughing code. ADAS staff in the field are aware of the code's provisions and will take account of it when advising farmers in circumstances where it is relevant.

Pesticides

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list the pesticides which have been approved for use in the United Kingdom and in respect of which toxicological data were submitted which originated from the International Bio Test laboratory.

Mr. Donald Thompson: To answer my hon. Friend's question in full would involve disproportionate cost. International Bio Test laboratories were involved in producing studies to support the registration of pesticides for over 10 years until 1978, but the question of fraudulent studies arose chiefly in the later years. In 1978 the United States authorities listed 123 products (both active ingredients and formulations) whose United States

registration depended in part on IBT studies from all periods of the company's operation. The United Kingdom's examination in 1980 demonstrated 12 active ingredients which were of concern as a result and the Government's handling of these cases was detailed in the reply from my predecessor in this post to the hon. Member on 9 June 1986. No estimate is available of the number of studies which were judged at that time to give no grounds for concern.

Aluminium Cooking Utensils

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the variations in the extent to which particular foods dissolve aluminium from cooking utensils.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The interdepartmental steering group on food surveillance has examined information on aluminium in food from aluminium cookware. It has concluded that the contribution to the average dietary intake from this source was small.

Airborne Fishery Patrols

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the cost, efficiency and effectiveness of the airborne fishery patrols operated for his department in England and Wales and in the Falkland Islands;

(2) what aircraft and radar equipment are used for aiborne fishery patrols by his Department in England and Wales and in the Falkland Islands; and what contractual arrangements apply to the operation of this service.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend announced on 14 November 1985 the conclusions of a Government review of the arrangements for fisheres protection in the United Kingdom. On long-range aerial surveillance, where the role is more observation and collction of information rather than direct enforcement, Ministers concluded that the task could be carried out at lower cost using civilian aircraft of a lighter type than RAF Nimrods then employed for this task. Inshore aerial survillance would continue to be provided by civilian aircraft. Arrangements were put in hand to implement these conclusions.

At present, inshore surveillance patrols in England and Wales are undertaken by a Turbine Islander, while a Dornier 228 operates in offshore areas. A second Dornier 228 is due to come into service in July. The Turbine Islander and the Dornier are equipped with a Sperry Prisms 500 radar; both Dorniers will use a Bendix RDR 1500 radar as from July.

The operational requirements for serial surveillance are controlled by the Ministry, but the aircraft and their equipment are provided, and flown under contract by FR Aviation Limited at a cost of just over £2 million per annum over the next five years. This "turn-key" arrangement has proved to be a most cost-effective way of implementing the Ministry's aerial surveillance responsibilities.

The arrangements made by the Falkland Islands authorities for aerial surveillance of their waters are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Food Aid

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many instances have occurred where supplies of surplus European Economic Community food being made available for free distribution have been found on sale in retail shops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *389*]: The Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce has detected three such cases involving a total of 81 retail-size packs of butter, and investigations of the circumstances are proceeding. All the butter concerned has been recovered for free distribution by charitable organisations to the most needy.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will discuss the distribution arrangements for European Economic Community butter with the voluntary organisations which have been responsible for its distribution in Birmingham.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 30 March 1987, c. *389*]: My Department is in regular touch with the charitable organisations mentioned in my reply of 29 January to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). They and others have put to us a number of points about distribution arrangements in Birmingham and other areas. The scheme ended on 31 March, but these observations will be noted for future reference.

Oils and Fats

Mrs. McCurley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the scope and nature of the proposed European Economic Community tax on oils and fats.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 31 March 1987, c. *445*]: The European Commission's proposal for a vegetable and marine oil price stabilisation system would involve a tax on all refined vegetable and marine oils for human consumption, whether produced in the Community or imported from third countries with effect from 1 July 1987. The initial rate of tax is forecast at about £250 per tonne which would approximately double the price of refined oils subject to it. The Government are firmly opposed to this proposal.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Japan

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the problems arising from restrictions on Anglo-Japanese trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: We and our Community partners are determined to reduce restrictions on Anglo-Japanese trade, whether formal or resulting from structural macro economic factors. To this end we have called on Japan to implement the Maekawa report recommendations and to proceed more rapidly with its action plan for market access. Where specific problems arise, for example on alcoholic drinks, we are pursuing these vigorously through the GATT.

South Africa

Mr. Cabora asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in the light of the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 591 of 1986, Her Majesty's Government will review their decision to license the export to South Africa of the Plessey AR3D military radar system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Cabora asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the export of Landrovers to South Africa for use by the South African military and police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Exports of vehicles specially designed for military purposes are subject to control to all destinations under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985, as amended. The Government fully comply with the United Nations arms embargo against South Africa.

Mr. Cabora asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action has been taken since 28 November 1986 to implement the ban, in United Nations Security Council resolution 591, on the export to South Africa of *(a)* aircraft, *(b)* aircraft engines, *(c)* aircraft spares, *(d)* electronic and telecommunication equipment, *(e)* computers and *(f)* four-wheel drive vehicles, destined for the military or police forces and which have a military capacity or are intended for military purposes.

Mr. Alan Clark: None is required. Security Council resolution No. 591, which is non-mandatory, is a clarification of the 1977 embargo, which we already fully implement, and not an extension of its provisions.

Television Pictures by Telephone (Exhibition)

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to television pictures by telephone for defence and security to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Pattie: Arrangements have been made for such an exhibition in the Upper Waiting Hall to take place from Monday 4 May to Friday 8 May 1987.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total expenditure by all Government Departments on Westland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Pattie [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 March 1987, c. *525*]: Government expenditure on Westland in the financial years 1981-82 to 1985-86 (the last full years for which figures are available) was as follows:

DTI	*£'000*
1981-82	181
1982-83	10,100
1983-84	10,813
1984-85	17,847
1985-86	8,667

MOD: In each of the above years the company was paid over £150 million (at the price levels for the relevant years) by the Ministry of Defence.

TRANSPORT

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Sideguards)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to bring to the attention of haulage contractors the requirement to install sideguards on heavy goods vehicles; and what steps he has taken to monitor their effectiveness.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The regulations have had very wide publicity and I believe haulage contractors know their legal obligations. The effect should in due course show in a reduction in the number of pedestrians and cyclists killed or severely injured by heavy goods vehicles. This is monitored through the accident reporting system.

Motorways (Crash Barriers)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he proposes to take to ascertain whether steel motorway crash barriers have been installed correctly;

(2) if he will publish the construction specification of steel motorway crash barriers relevant to their original installation;

(3) if he will estimate how many miles of steel motorway crash barrier have been installed to sub-standard specification;

(4) if he is satisfied with the standard of construction of steel motorway crash barriers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Detailed inspection of safety fences are being made where land closures are required for major carriageway works that give access to safety fences. These inspections are in addition to those being carried out under a code of practice for routine maintenance introduced in 1985.

A specification for tensioned corrugated beam safety fences, the most common type of fence used on motorways, was first issued in 1969. It has been revised several times since then. All specifications have been published and are listed as follows:

Specification for Road and Bridge Works—4th Edition 1969.

Technical Memorandum No. H9/73, Safety Fences 1973.

Specification for Road and Bridge Works—5th Edition 1976.

Specification for Road and Bridge Works—Supplement No. 1 1978.

Specification for Highway Works—6th Edition 1986. To be implemented in 1988.

A reliable estimate of the length of safety fences that does not meet our specification cannot be made. The inspections already referred to are designed to identify the conditions of safety fences and remedial works required. We estimate that detailed inspections this year will cover a sample of up to about 150 miles of motorway safety fences.

Research has shown that the safety fences generally perform well, and I have no reason at present to believe that they are not constructed generally to a satisfactory standard.

I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 25 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), and my subsequent letter to him of 27 March, a copy of which is in the Library.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Care in the Community

Mr. Dubs asked the Seretary of State for Social Services how many elderly, mentally ill and mentally handicapped patients have been dischaged from hospital under the care in the community programme for each year since it began.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the numbers of patients discharged from hospital under the care in the community programme is not collected centrally. Using duration of stay information collected in the mental health inquiry, an indication of the number of mentally ill and mentally handicapped people who have been settled in the community after, in effect, living in hospital can be derived from statistics of those discharged after stays of five years or more as given in the table. Some of these people may need to be readmitted for a time; for example, because of changes in their condition. Duration of stay information is not colleected centrally for elderly patients and it is therefore not possible to derive a similar indication for them from the figures.

Discharges[1] from mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England after durations of stay of 5 years or more (excluding transfers to other NHS hospitals and special hospitals)

Year	Mental Illness	Mental handicap
1983	821	967
1984	981	1,375
1985	986	1,522

[1] Excludes transfer to other NHS hospitals and Special hospitals.
Note: 1986 figures not yet available.

Mentally Handicappd Patient (Sterilisation)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the effects on his policy for mentally handicapped people of the recent Appeal Court ruling approving of the sterilisation of a 17-year-old mentally handicapped patient.

Mrs. Currie: Whether sterilisation is advisable for any mentally handicapped child or adult, and the rights and duties of the individual, parents and others concerned, are important and difficult issues on which up to now the law has not been entirely clear. Following the recent appeal court ruling in an individual case, the House of Lords heard an appeal on 2 April, and the Government will await the outcome before considering what further action may be necessary.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons were detained under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in special hospitals in the last four years for which records are kept, broken down by special hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: The numbers of patients detained under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in each of the four special hospitals, as at 31 December 1983, 1984 and 1985 (the last year for which figures are available) were as follows:

Special Hospital	31 December 1983	31 December 1984	31 December 1985
Broadmoor	39	31	36
Rampton	41	50	52
Moss Side	5	9	12
Park Lane	22	32	51

Records kept for the years prior to 1983 do not identify separately the number of patients detained under the equivalent of section 47.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the ethnic origin of persons detained under section 47 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in special hospitals in the last four years for which records are kept, broken down by special hospitals;

(2) if he will list the ethnic origin of persons detained in special hospitals in the last four years for which figures are available, broken down by special hospital and by sections of the Mental Health Act or other legislation under which persons were detained.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available.

Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research is being financed by his Department into the rare disease called dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa.

Mrs. Currie: The main Government agency for the promotion of medical and related biological research in the United Kingdom is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science.

This Department and the MRC are not at present funding research into dystrophic epidermolysis bullosa.

COMA

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Seretary of State for Social Services when he received the report of the working groups of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) on dietary matters; when it is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the report of the COMA working group on very low calorie diets. I refer him to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) on 26 March at column *259*.

Family Heart Association (Exhibition)

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Family Heart Association to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 27 April 1987 to 1 May 1987.

Artificial Limbs and Appliances

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has

received from the Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning the Government's decisions on the future of the services provided by artificial limb and appliance centres; what reply has been sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain and Northern Ireland submitted a detailed response to the McColl report on artificial limb and appliance centre services immediately following its publication. Since then, its view that the recommendation to provide dual-purpose powered wheelchairs should be implemented as a matter of urgency has been the subject of a number of letters received from local branches of the group. In addition, on 7 May 1986, my predecessor accepted a petition from Sir Richard Attenborough, the president of the group, in support of this request.

On the specific point of dual-purpose powered wheelchairs the Muscular Dystrophy Group has been advised that there are major cost considerations still to be resolved and that a final decision has not yet been made.

On the wider issue of the future of the artificial limb and appliance centre services, I refer the right hon. Member to my statement to the House on 10 March 1987 at columns 149-51.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applicants for the vaccine damage payment have had their application rejected because their application was out of time.

Mr. Lyell: At 6 March 1987, the latest date for which information is available, 73 claims had been rejected because they were out of time.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that in every centre where vaccination is carried out there is a poster drawing attention to the provision of a vaccine damage payment.

Mr. Lyell: We have no plans to do so. General information about the vaccine damage payments scheme is contained in our leaflets dealing with benefits for sick and disabled people. These leaflets are freely available at local social security offices and post offices. In addition, the Health Education Council publishes leaflets on whooping cough and on immunisation generally which set out clearly all the facts on vaccination. These are available to the public.

Benefits

Mr. Alfed Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 11 March, *Official Report*, column *230*, he will state the value of each of the benefits listed for a single person without dependants at 1986-87 prices in 1978-79 and 1986-87; if he will indicate those benefits which have increased by 30 per cent. in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The table shows the average rates of the relevant benefits in constant 1986-87 prices. It should be stressed that the figures in the table relate to specified basic rates of benefit rather than to the average amount received by an individual sick or disabled person. The latter amount increased by roughtly 9 per cent. in real terms over the period; the figure of 30 per cent. relates to the proportion of the total increase in expenditure due to increases in average amounts rather than increases in numbers of beneficiaries.

Average rates of benefit paid to a single person, 1978-79 and 1986-87 at 1986-87 prices

	1978-79 average £	*1986-87 average* £	*Percentage change 1978-79 to 1986-87*
Invalidity Benefit	35·35	38·55	9
Sickness Benefit	29·30	29·35	0·2
Industrial Disablement Benefit (100% rate)	57·85	62·95	9
Attendance Allowance (Higher Rate)	28·30	30·85	9
Attendance Allowance (Lower rate)	18·85	20·60	9
Severe Disablement Allowance	21·20	23·15	9
Mobility Allowance	15·60	21·55	38
Invalid Care Allowance	21·20	23·15	9
War disablement pension (100% rate, lowest rank)	57·85	62·95	9
Christmas Bonus[1]	19·45	10·00	−49
Supplementary benefit[2]	28·90	29·70	3
Standard housing benefit[3]	50·45	47·95	−5

[1] The comparison is between the Christmas bonus paid in December 1978 and that paid in December 1986.
[2] This comparison is between the average (1978-79 and 1986-87) ordinary scale rates for single householders used in calculating supplementary benefit entitlement both in 1986-87 prices. The structure of supplementary benefit is such that the scale rate is only an imprecise guide to the amount of benefit actually paid.
[3] The comparison is between the average 1978-79 and 1986-87 needs allowance for a single person. As for supplementary benefit, such a comparison is not an accurate guide to the amount of benefit actually paid.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost in benefits in a full year of unemployed school leavers between the ages of 16 and 18; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide estimates of the numbers of *(a)* family income supplement recipients and *(b)* standard housing benefit recipients by earnings distribution using the following ranges of gross weekly earnings (i) below £80, (ii) £80 to £90, (iii) £90 to £100, (iv) £100 to £110, (v) £110 to £120 and (vi) above £120; and if he will indicate the average amount of benefit paid to those falling within each of these ranges.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Senile Dementia

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of people suffering from progressive senile dementia.

Mrs. Currie: Various estimates, including those of the Health Advisory Service in its 1982 report "The Rising Tide", and those of the Royal College of Physicians in its 1981 report on "Organic Mental Impairment in the Elderly", put the prevalence of dementia in the elderly at

between 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. in those over the age of 65, and around 20 per cent. in those over the age of 80. However, such estimates must be treated with caution, since functional psychiatric illness and confusional states in the elderly can be confused with dementia. Long-term studies are needed to provide more accurate estimates of incidence, and one such study is currently under consideration by the Medical Research Council.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the revenue surplus or deficit, and the level of annual spending, of each district health authority at the end of each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Medicines

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will consult with doctors on whether further opportunities exist to reduce the number of drugs available on the limited list; if he will further consider the effects of such a reduction on patient care; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures he is taking to foster competition between drug manufacturing companies in the provision of medicines; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will consider whether the system of licensing and approving new improved drugs could be assisted by encouraging limited trials within the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

War Widows (Pensions)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the cost of providing an additional £10 pension per week for war widows who were widowed before 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lyell: It is estimated that the cost would be in the region of £30 million a year.

War widows pensions are the same irrespective of the date of widowhood or the conflict in which the service man was injured or gave his life.

The basic war widows pension will be increased to £51·35 a week from 6 April. That is about 30 per cent. higher than national insurance widows pension. In addition, age allowances are paid. They are also being increased from 6 April, to £5·50 a week at age 65, £11 at 70 and £13·85 at 80. The pensions are tax free. War widows may also receive other benefits, such as a retirement pension if they have paid national insurance contributions, and housing benefit.

Meningitis

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to ensure that all cases of meningitis are reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 March 1987, c. *412*]: Meningitis, as a notifiable disease, is required to be notified to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) through the medical officer for environmental health, and not to the communicable disease surveillance centre (CDSC). However, CDSC does receive reports from public health laboratories of all cases of meningitis confirmed in the laboratory, and has prepared a composite of these reports and the notifications to OPCS. A comparative study has shown that there is a high degree of concordance between the two sets of figures.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mrs. Shields asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards civil rights for mentally handicapped people.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 April 1987]: The Government's policy is that people with a mental handicap should, within their capacity to exercise those rights directly and through the advocacy of others where necessary, have the same basic rights as everyone else; and should in addition be entitled to enabling support according to their current individual needs.

Health Centre, Moulsecoombe

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to persuade the South-East regional health authority that the proposed start date for the health centre on the Moulsecoombe estate should be brought forward from 1992 in line with its agreed priority for the area.

Mrs. Currie [*pursuant to her reply*, 2 April 1987]: The views of local general practitioners are being sought by Brighton health authority on whether or not a health centre on the Moulsecoombe estate in Brighton would best meet local primary health care needs. The planning of local health services is primarily a matter for individual health authorities. The hon. Member may therefore care to address any further inquiries to the chairman of Brighton health authority.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 113**

SESSION 1986–87

23rd March—3rd April 1987

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

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